

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER 1, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LAST CARGO.

AT the window of her bed-room in the Grey Nunnery, steadily gazing out to sea, stood Mary Ursula Castlemaine. The night was almost as light as though the moon were shining : for a sort of light haze, partially covering the skies, seemed to illumine the earth and make things visible. December had come in, but the weather was still balmy.

As the days and weeks had gone on since that communication made to Miss Castlemaine by Walter Dance the night of his accident (to be retracted by him in the morning), the doubt in her mind and the uneasiness it caused rarely gave her rest. The evidence of her own senses she could not question, therefore she did believe that the wholesale smuggling, confessed to by young Dance in his fear of death, was an actual fact—that cargoes of lace, and what not, were periodically run. And an idea had taken firm hold of her, arising she knew not from what instinct, that the ill-fate of Anthony—had any ill-fate in truth overtaken him—must have arisen through the doings of one of these disturbed nights when the Friar's Keep was invaded by lawless bands of sailors. It was for this reason she could not rest ; it was this never-forgotten thought that disturbed her peace by day and her sleep by night. The smuggling and the smugglers she would only have been too glad to forget ; but the mysterious fate of Anthony lay on her mind like a chronic nightmare. Many a night had she stood at her casement window as she was standing now ; though not always, perhaps not often. But not until to-night

had she seen the same two-masted vessel—or what she took to be the same. It had certainly not been visible at sunset: but there it lay now, its masts tapering upwards, and its shape distinctly visible in the white haze, just in the same spot that it had lain that other night.

Mary wrapped herself up, and put her casement window open, and sat down and watched. Watched and waited. As the clocks told midnight, some stir was discernible on board; and presently the small boats, as before, came shooting out from the ship through the water. There could be no mistake: another of those nefarious cargoes was about to be run.

With a pale face but resolute heart, Mary Ursula Castlemaine rose up. She would go forth again through the secret passage, and look on at these men. Not to denounce them; not to betray her presence or her knowledge of what they were about; but simply to endeavour to ascertain whether her uncle made one at the work.

Procuring the keys and the dark lantern, she started. It was colder by far in the passage than it had been those other nights, for the time of the year was later: cold, and damp, and woefully dreary: and Mary's courage oozed out at every step.

Meanwhile the boats had come in, been hauled up on the beach, and the goods were being landed. The men worked with a will. They wore sea boots, and waded through the water with the bales on their shoulders. Much jabbering was carried on, for some of the sailors were foreigners; but all spoke in covert tones. The sailors were working as they worked on board ship, open and undisguised; Commodore Teague was undisguised; but the other three men—for there were three others—wore capes and had huge caps tied on over their ears and brows; and in the uncertain light their best friends might not have known them. Two of these, it is as well to say it, were Tom Dance and his son; the other was a tall, slender, fine-figured young man, who seemed to look on, rather than to work, and who had not the heavy sea boots on. But there was no sign of the Master of Greylands. The bales were carried up, and put down close to the walls of the Keep. Later they would be conveyed through the passage to the cellars of the Hutt.

"Where you lay de pistols?" asked a sailor in imperfect English, as he slung down a huge bale from his shoulder.

"Down there as usual, Jansen," replied another, pointing to some raised stonework projecting from the walls of the Keep. "And the cutlasses too. Where should they be!"

"What do Jansen ask that for, Bill?" questioned one, of the last speaker.

"I get a bad dream last night," said Jansen, answering for himself. "I dream we all fighting, head, tail, wi' dem skulking coast-guard. 'Jack,' he says to me in dream, 'where de knives, where de pistols,'

—and we search about and we not find no knives, no pistols ; and dey overpower us, and I call out, an' den I wake."

"I don't like them dreams," cried one of the ship's crew.

"Dreams be hanged ; there's nothing in 'em," struck in Tom Dance. "I dreamed one night, years ago, as my old mother was lying dead afore me : stead o' that, she told me next day she'd get married again if I didn't behave myself."

"Bear a hand here, Dance," said the Commodore.

At this moment there was heard the sound of a boat dashing up through the waters.

Before the men could well look out, or discover what it meant, she was close in, and upon them. A boat that had stolen silently out from under the walls of the Grey Nunnery, where she had been lying concealed, waiting to pounce upon her prey. It was a boat belonging to the Preventive Service, and it contained Mr. Superintendent Nettleby and his coast-guardsmen. After years of immunity the smugglers were discovered at last.

"In the King's name !" shouted the Superintendent, as he sprang into the shallow water.

Mr. Jansen's dream had not told him true ; inasmuch as the pistols and cutlasses lay ready to hand, and were at once snatched up by their owners. A desperate fight ensued ; a hand-to-hand struggle ; pistols were fired, oaths were hissed out, knives were put to work. But though the struggle was fierce it was very short : all the efforts of the smugglers, both sailors and landsmen, were directed to securing their own safety by escaping to the ship. And just as Mary Ursula appeared upon the scene, they succeeded in pushing the boats off, and scrambling into them.

Mary was horror-struck. She had bargained for seeing rough men running packages of goods : but she had never thought of fighting, and cries, and murder. Once within the vaults of the Friar's Keep, the noise had guided her to the open door she had seen before, open again now ; and she stood there sick and trembling.

They did not see her ; she took care of that. Hiding behind a pillar, her lantern darkened, she peeped out, shivering, on the scene. In the confusion she understood very little ; she saw very little ; though the cause of it all was plain enough to her mind—the smugglers had been surprised by the Preventive men. She stood close to the scene of turmoil, hearing the harsh voices, the rough words, glancing out at the pile of goods, and at the dusky figures before her moving about in the night. It was like a panoramic picture dimly seen.

Almost as by sleight of hand, for Mary did not see how or where they went, the men and the commotion disappeared together. The ship's boats, unfollowed, were hastening away to the ship : but what became of Mr. Nettleby and his staff? A moment ago the small

portion of the beach close before her, that was not under water, had been alive with the Preventive men ; Mary had recognized the superintendent's voice as he shouted out some order ; and now not a soul was visible. No doubt they were exploring the inner corners of this bit of beach, never suspected of fraud, never visited by his Majesty's servants until now. She cautiously advanced a step or two, and looked out. There lay, hauled up on the beach half-way, the waiting boat, which she supposed to be unoccupied. In fact, two wounded men were lying in it, one of them having fainted from loss of blood.

A short while, and the officers re-appeared. Mary drew back. Some of them got into the boat, and it was pushed off ; three of them remained, either from want of space in the boat, or to keep guard over the goods, one of whom was Mr. Nettleby.

Pushing up the slide of one side of the lantern to guide her steps, Mary was retracing her way through the vaults, when a ray of the light flashed upon a figure. A moving figure in woman's clothes, that seemed to be endeavouring to hide itself. Mary lifted her lantern, and saw the face of Jane Hallet.

Of Jane Hallet ! Just for a moment or two a sickness, as of some supernatural fear, seized upon Miss Castlemaine. For Jane had never been heard of yet in Greylands, and very little doubt existed that she had found her bed at the bottom of the sea. The dark hood she was in the habit of wearing at night had fallen back from her face ; her eyes wore a strange, terrified, appealing look in the sudden and startling light.

Recovering her better reason, Mary laid her detaining hand upon her before she could escape. Which of the two faces was the whiter, it would have been hard to say.

“ Is it you, Jane Hallet ? ”

“ Yes, madam, it is me,” gasped Jane in answer.

“ Where have you been all the while, and whence do you come ? And what brings you in this place now ? ”

The explanation was given in a few brief sentences. Jane, alarmed at the idea, presented to her by the Grey Ladies, of going out to service, against which step there existed private reasons, had taken straight refuge in Dame Dance's cottage under the cliff : she had been there ever since and was there still. Old Mrs. Dance was like a mother to her, she added, and had been in her entire confidence for a long while. As to what brought her in that place to-night, why she was watching, she told Miss Castlemaine with much emotion ; watching for the dreadful evil that had to-night occurred.

“ I have been dreading it always, madam,” she said, her breath short in its agitation. “ I knew, through my brother, of the work that was sometimes done here—though he betrayed it to me by accident, not intentionally. I have come to the chapel ruins of a night to see

if there were preparations being made for running a cargo, and look whether the vessel, whose shape I knew, was standing out at sea. One night in the autumn I saw them run the goods: I was watching all the while. It was one o'clock when I got home, and my aunt was fit to strike me: for I could not tell her why I stayed out."

"Watching for what?" imperiously spoke Miss Castlemaine.

"Oh, madam, don't you see?—for the Preventive men. I was ever fearing that they would discover the work some night, and surprise it—as they have now done. I thought if I were on the watch for this (which nobody else, so far as I could guess, seemed to fear or think of), I might be in time to warn—to warn those who were doing it. But the officers were too cunning for me, too quick: as I stood just now looking over the low brink of the chapel ruins, I saw a boat shoot past from underneath the walls of the Nunnery, and I knew what it was. Before I got down here the fight had begun."

Jane had gone into a fit of trembling. Somehow Miss Castlemaine's heart was hardening to her.

"At nine o'clock this evening I thought I saw the vessel standing off in the far distance," resumed Jane: "so I came out later and watched her move up to her usual place, and have been watching since on the chapel ruins."

"May I inquire who knew of this watching of yours?" asked Mary Ursula, her tone full of resentment.

"Not any one, madam. Not any one in the world."

"Not Mr. Harry Castlemaine?"

"Oh, no. I should not dare to speak of the subject to him, unless he first spoke of it to me. I have wished he would."

"As there is nothing more that can be done here to-night, of watching or else, I think you had better return home, Jane Hallet," spoke Miss Castlemaine in the same proud, cold tone; though she inwardly wondered which way of egress Jane would take.

"I was just going," spoke the trembling girl. "There—there is not—ah! forgive me, madam!—any one lying wounded on the beach, I hope?"

"I presume not," replied Miss Castlemaine. "The superintendent and his men are there."

Jane Hallet turned meekly and disappeared amid the pillars. Miss Castlemaine rightly conjectured that there must be some stairs leading from these lower cloisters to the cloisters above that opened on the chapel ruins. By these Jane had no doubt descended, and would now ascend. In point of fact, it was so. George Hallet had eventually made a clean breast of all the secret to Jane, including the openings and passages. But the underground passage to the Grey Nunnery neither he nor anyone else knew of.

Miss Castlemaine turned to it now. She was crossing towards it,

her dim lantern held aloft to steer her between the pillars, when her foot stumbled against something. Marching slowly, she did not fall, and recovered herself at once. Bringing the light to bear, she stooped down and saw a man lying there on his back. He looked immensely tall, and wore a big cape, and had a cap muffled over his forehead and eyes, and lay still as one dead. With another faint sickness of heart, Mary pulled the cap upwards, for she thought she recognized the handsome features. Alas, yes! they were those of Harry Castlemaine; and they were set in what looked like the rigidness of death.

With a shrill cry—for her feelings got the better of her—Mary called him by name, and shook him gently. No, there was no response: he was surely dead! She tore the cape and cap off, flinging them aside: she put her hand to his heart, and could feel no pulse; she lifted one of his hands, and it fell again like a heavy weight. Panting with fear and emotion, all considerations lost sight of in this one great shock, Mary went back to the beach crying for aid, and supremely astonishing Mr. Superintendent Nettleby.

Mr. Harry Castlemaine! Mr. Harry Castlemaine lying inside there as one dead! Why, how did that come about? What had brought him down there? unless, indeed, he had heard the row and the fighting? But then—how did he get down?

Mr. Nettleby spoke these problems aloud as he proceeded by Miss Castlemaine's side to the spot, guided by her lantern, and followed by his two men. He assumed that the Grey Nunnery must have been aroused by the noise, and that the Lady Superior had come forth to see what it meant: and he politely apologized for having been the cause of disturbance to the sisters. Mary allowed him to think this: and made no answer to his further expressed wonder of how *she* found her way down.

When they reached the spot where lay Harry Castlemaine, the first object the rays of the lantern flashed on was Jane Hallet. Aroused by Miss Castlemaine's cry, she had hastened back again, and was now kneeling beside him, her trembling hands chafing his lifeless ones, her face a distressing picture of mute agony.

"Move away," spoke Miss Castlemaine.

Jane rose instantly, with a catching of the breath, and obeyed. Mr. Superintendent Nettleby, asking for the lantern to be held by one of his men, and to have its full light turned on, knelt down and proceeded to make what examination he could.

"I don't think he is dead, madam," he said to Mary Ursula, "but I do fear he is desperately wounded. How the dickens can it have come about?" he added, in a lower tone meant for himself, and rising from his knees. "Could one of the fools have fired off a shot in here, and caught him as he was coming on to us? Well, we must get him up to land somehow—and my boat's gone off!"

"He had better be brought to the Grey Nunnery : it is the nearest place," spoke Mary.

"True," said the officer. "But which on earth is the way to it out of here?"

"Up these stairs. I will show you," said Jane Hallet, stepping forward again. "Please let me go on with the lantern."

She caught it up : she seemed nearly beside herself with grief and distress ; and the officer and men raised Harry Castlemaine. Mary remembered the cape she had thrown aside, and could not see it, or the cap either. It was just as well, she thought, for the things looked to her like garments worn for disguise, and they might have told tales. Even then an idea was crossing her mind that the worst—the complicity of the Castlemaines with smuggling—might be kept from the world. Yes, it was just as well : that cape and cap might have been recognized by the superintendent and his men as being the same sort that were worn by the iniquitous offenders they had surprised. No such sinners in the whole decalogue of the world's crimes, according to the estimation of Mr. Nettleby, as those who defrauded his Majesty's revenues.

"He must have come out without his hat, or lost it," spoke the superintendent, looking down at the head he supported. "Take care my men, that's—blood."

The stairs were soon reached : some winding steps cut in stone. Jane Hallet held the lantern to show the way ; Miss Castlemaine, saying never a word of the secret passage, followed her ; the men and their burden bringing up the rear. It was a difficult job to bring him up, for the staircase was very narrow. They came out at nearly the extreme end of the upper cloisters, and had to walk through them to the Chapel ruins. Mr. Nettleby never supposed but that the two women, as well as Harry Castlemaine, had come down by this route.

"To think that I should never have suspected any stairs were there, or that there was another set of cloisters under these!" he exclaimed in self-humiliation, as he walked on through with the rest, avoiding the pillars. "Had I known it, and [that there was a door opening to that strip of beach below, it would have been enough to tell me what might be going on. But how the deuce do they contrive to get rid of the goods after they are run?"

For Mr. Superintendent Nettleby was still ignorant of one thing—the secret passage to Commodore Teague's house. He would not be likely to discover or suspect that, until [the official search took place that would be made on the morrow.

Once more the Nunnery was about to be disturbed to admit a wounded man at midnight : this second man, alas! wounded unto death. Tom Dance's son had gone forth to the world again, little the worse ; for the son and heir of the Master of Greylands, earth was closing.

The clanging night bell aroused the inmates, and Sister Rachel, who was that week portress, went down accompanied by Sister Caroline. To describe their astonishment when they saw the line of those waiting to enter, would be impossible. Harry Castlemaine, whom the motion and air had revived, borne by Mr. Nettleby and two of the coast-guardsmen; the Superior, Mary Ursula; and the resuscitated Jane Hallet! Jane the erring, with the Nunnery lantern!

"Business called me abroad to-night: I did not disturb you," quietly observed Sister Mary Ursula to the round-eyed Sisters: and it was all the explanation she gave, then or later.

Harry was taken into the same room that Walter Dance had been, and laid upon the same flat, wide sofa. One of the men ran off for Mr. Parker. The other went back with the superintendent to the scene of the struggle: the captured goods, so many of them as had been landed, had to be zealously guarded. Mr. Superintendent Nettleby had never gained such a feather in his cap as this.

Harry Castlemaine lay where he had been placed, his once fresh face bereft of its fine colour, his eyes open to the movements around. Only Mary Ursula was with him.

"Mr. Parker will soon be here, Harry," she said gently, bending over him.

A faint smile crossed his lips. "He can do nothing for me, Mary."

"Nay, you must not think that. You feel faint; but ——"

Some slight stir behind her caught Mary's senses, and caused her to turn. There was Jane Hallet, standing half in half out at the door, a mute, deprecatory appeal, for permission to enter, shining unmistakably on her sad white face.

"Back!" said Mary with calm authority, advancing to the door with her most stately step, her hand raised to repel the intruder. "I told you to go home, Jane Hallet: it is the only thing you can do. You have no right to intrude yourself into the Nunnery. Go."

As she quietly closed the door, shutting Jane out, and returned to the bedside, Harry's hand was feebly stretched out: it fell on her arm. "Let her come in, Mary: she is my wife."

"Your wife!"

"Yes; my wife. She has been my wife all along."

"I do not understand," faltered Mary, feeling she hardly knew how.

"We were married at the beginning of last winter. Fear of my father's displeasure has prevented my declaring it."

Mary was silent. Her heart throbbed unpleasantly.

"Jane is too good a girl for aught else," he resumed, the subject seeming to impart to him some fictitious strength. "She has borne all the obloquy in patience and silence for my sake. Do you suppose, Mary,

that the favourite pupil of the Grey Ladies, trained by *them*, could have turned out unworthily?"

" You should, at least, have confided this to Miss Hallet, Harry."

" No ; to her the least of all. Miss Hallet has her pride and her notions, and would have proclaimed it in the market-place."

" I seem not to comprehend yet," replied Mary, many remembrances crowding upon her. " Last winter ; yes, and since then, Harry ; you appeared to be seeking Ethel Reene for your wife."

" I once had an idea of Ethel. I knew not that the warm affection I felt for her was but that of a brother : when I fell in love with Jane I learnt the contrary. My teasings of Ethel have been but jest, Mary : pursued to divert attention from my intimacy with my real love, my wife."

Mary Ursula sighed. Harry had always been random and blamable in some way or other. What a blow this would be for the Master of Greylands !

" You will let her come in, Mary ! Are you doubting still ?" he resumed, noting her perplexed countenance. " Why, Mary Ursula, had my relations with Jane been what the world assumed, can you imagine I should have had the hardihood to intrude my brazen face here amid the Sisters when she was taken ill ? I have my share of impudence, I am told ; but I have certainly not enough for that. I sought that minute's interview with Jane to bade her be firm—to bear all reproaches, spoken and unspoken, for my sake and my father's peace. The only wonder to me, and to Jane also, has been that nobody ever suspected the truth."

Mary Ursula left the room. Jane was leaning against the wall outside in the semi-darkness, a picture of quiet tribulation. Too conscious of the estimation in which she was held, she did not dare assert herself. Jealous for the honour of her family, Mary Ursula was feeling the moment bitterly.

" Mr. Harry Castlemaine has been making a strange communication to me," she began. " He says he has married you."

" Oh, madam, it is true," returned Jane hysterically, the sudden revulsion of feeling at finding it was known, the relief from her miserable concealment, taking vent in a flood of tears. " We were married last November."

" By whom ?"

" Parson Marston," sobbed Jane. " He married us in his church at Stilborough."

Surprise, resentment, condemnation of Parson Marston overpowered Miss Castlemaine and kept her silent. Thinking of this inferior girl—very inferior as compared with the Castlemaines—as they had all been thinking lately, it was not in human nature that Mary should not feel it strongly. She had her share of the Castlemaine pride ; though she had

perhaps thought that it was laid down within her when she came out of her home at Stilborough to enter the Grey Nunnery.

"It was very strange of Mr. Marston ; very wrong."

Jane's sobs did not allow her to make any rejoinder. Of course it was wrong : nobody felt more assured of that than Jane. She did not dare to tell how Harry Castlemaine's masterful will had carried all with him, including herself and the parson. Jane had perhaps been quite willing to be carried ; and the parson yielded to "You must," and was, besides, reprehensibly indifferent.

"How long should you have kept it secret?" asked Miss Castlemaine, looking at Jane in her distress.

"As long as my husband had wished me to keep it, madam," was the sobbing answer. "He was always hoping some occasion might arise for declaring it ; but he did not like to vex Mr. Castlemaine. It was my aunt's not knowing it that grieved me most. It was very hard to bear, madam, all that blame ; but I tried to be patient. And many might have thought nearly as ill of me for letting one so much above me make me his wife."

"Has no one at all known it?" asked Mary.

"Only old Mrs. Dance. She has known it from the first. We used to meet at her cottage."

"Well, Jane, what is done cannot be undone. You are his wife, it seems, and have been undeserving of the reproach of light conduct cast upon you. So far I am, for your sake, glad. He has asked to see you. You can go in."

So Jane Hallet—no longer Hallet, however—crept into the chamber, where her husband lay dying, and stood by his side, her heart breaking.

"Don't grieve, Jane, more than you can help," he said, clasping her hand. "This will answer one good end : you will be cleared."

She fell on her knees, weeping silent tears.

"To save your life I would remain under the cloud for ever," she sighed. "Oh, is there no hope?—is there no hope?"

"Well, we shall see : the doctor will be here soon," said Harry evasively. "There ! dry your tears, Jane ; take heart, my dear."

And the doctor came without much further delay, and examined his patient, and found that a bullet had lodged itself within him.

"There must be an operation," said he, smoothing over his grave face. And he hastened to despatch a messenger on a fleet horse for Surgeon Croft, the most clever operating surgeon in Stilborough.

But Mr. Parker knew quite well that there remained no hope in this world for Harry Castlemaine.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GONE !

MORNING dawned. The Grey Nunnery was like a fair. What with the doctors and their gigs, for two surgeons came from Stilborough, and the Sisters passing in and out on various errands, and the excited people who assembled in numbers round the gates, a stranger might have wondered at the commotion. More than once had Greylands been excited during the year now swiftly approaching its close, but never as much as now. A dreadful encounter between smugglers and the Preventive men ! and Harry Castlemaine shot down by one of their stray bullets ! and Jane Hallet come to life again !

The Master of Greylands sat by the dying couch, giving vent now and again to his dire distress. There was no hope for his son ; he knew it from the medical men : and his son had been the one only thing he had much cared for in life.

Of all the blows that had fallen on James Castlemaine, none had been like unto this. The shock alone was terrible. He had been aroused from his sleep at home to hear that his son was wounded unto death ; and he started in hot haste for the Nunnery. He bared his aching head to the night air, wondering what extent of misery he might be entering upon. No very long space of time had elapsed since he sat in his room dwelling upon the misfortunes and the deaths that the year had brought forth. Was there to be yet further misfortune ?—another death ? A death to him more cruel than any that had gone before it ? And he found his worst fears as to Harry realized, and learnt from Mr. Parker that there was no hope of saving him. Harry had fainted : and that night no private word passed between father and son.

With the morning Harry lay at tolerable ease and could converse at will. The surgeons had done for him what little could be done ; but his life was only a question of hours. In a distress, the like of which he had never before experienced, sat the Master of Greylands. His handsome, noble, attractive son, of whom he had been so proud, whom he had so beloved in his heart, was passing away from his sight for ever. His chair was drawn close to the couch, his hand lay in Harry's, his aching eyes rested on the pale, changed face. The whole world combined could not have wrought for him a trial such as this : his own death would have been as nothing to it : and the blow unnerved him.

They were alone together : none intruded unnecessarily on these closing hours. Harry gave briefly the history of the scene of the past night, thanking heaven aloud that his father was not present at it.

"The first two boats had not long been in, and not half their packages were landed, when another boat glided quietly up," said Harry. "I thought it was from the vessel with more goods, till I heard a shout

in Nettleby's tones 'In the King's name,' and found the revenue men were leaping out of her. I ran to close the passage to Teague's, and was coming back again when I found myself struck here," touching his side. "The pain was horrible : I knew what it meant—that I was shot, and useless—and I slipped into the vaults, intending to get up to the Chapel ruins, and so away. I must have fainted there, and fallen ; for I remember nothing more until Nettleby and the rest were bringing me in here.—Father, you know what this shot has done for me?"

The Master of Greylands did not answer.

"It is my death. I forced Croft to tell me. By to-night all will be over."

Mr. Castlemaine, striving and struggling to maintain composure, broke down helplessly at the last words, and sobbed aloud with an emotion never before betrayed by him to man. The distress to Harry was all too great : he had been truly attached to his indulgent father.

"For my sake, father!—for the little time I have to stay!" he said, imploringly. And the Master smothered his grief as he best might.

With his hand held between his father's, and his sad eyes beseeching pardon for the offence which in strong life he had dreaded to tell, Harry Castlemaine made his confession : Jane Hallet was his wife. It was somewhat of a shock, no doubt, to the Master of Greylands, but it fell with comparative lightness on his ear : beside the one vast trouble close at hand, others seemed as nothing. Jane might be his son's wife ; but his son would not live to own her as such to the world.

"Do you forgive me, father? That it was wrong, I am aware; but only myself knows how dearly I grew to love her. The place has been heaping scorn upon her, but she bore it all for my sake, knowing she would be cleared when I could declare it to you."

"She has not deserved the scorn, then?"

"Never. I would not have sought to hurt a hair of her head. Say you forgive me, father!—the moments are passing."

"Yes, yes, I forgive you ; I forgive you. Oh, my boy, I forgive all. I wish I could die instead of you."

"And—will you set her right with the world?" continued Harry, holding his father's hand against his cheek caressingly. "It is only you who can effectually do it, I think. And allow her a little income to maintain her in comfort?"

"Harry, I will do all."

"She is my wife, you see, father, and it is what should be. Your promise will ease my soul in dying. Had I lived, she would have shared my state and fortune."

"All, all : I will do all," said the Master of Greylands.

"For the past, it is not she who is to blame," continued Harry, anxious that there should be no misapprehension of Jane's conduct.

"She held out against the marriage on account of my family, always begging of me to wait. But I would have my way. Do not visit the blame upon her, father, for she does not deserve it."

"I understand : she shall have all justice, Harry. Be at peace."

But, in spite of this one absorbing grief for his son, there was another care that kept intruding itself in no minor degree on the Master of Greylands: and that was the business connected with the smugglers. How much of that was known?—how much had good fortune enabled them to keep concealed? While the doctors were again with Harry towards midday, Mr. Castlemaine snatched a moment to go out of doors.

How strange the broad glare of day appeared to him! Coming out of the darkened room from its hushed atmosphere, its overlying sadness, into the light of the sun, high in the heavens, the hum of the crowding people, the stir of health and busy life, the Master of Greylands seemed to have passed into another world. The room he had left was as the grave, where his son would soon be ; this moving scene was as some passing pageantry, very redolent of mundane earth.

Which Greylands was making the most of,—the strange accident to Harry Castlemaine (every whit as strange as the self-shooting that had temporarily disabled young Dance ; nay, stranger) ; or the astounding news touching the smugglers ; or the reappearance of Jane Hallet—it was hard to say. All kinds of reports were afloat ; some true, some untrue, as usual. Mr. Superintendent Nettleby, it appeared, had for a considerable time suspected that smuggling to an extraordinary extent was carried on somewhere along this line of coast. From information supplied to him, he had but little doubt that valuable goods found their contraband entrance somewhere ; within, say, the length of a dozen miles. His surmises were chiefly directed to the little place called Beeton, a mile or two higher up. They were directed to any spot rather than Greylands. Greylands, in the estimation of the revenue men, was exempt from suspicion, or nearly exempt. Save the open beach, they saw no spot at Greylands where a cargo could be run—and the superintendent took care that the beach should be protected. Counting on his ten fingers, Mr. Nettleby could number up fifteen months during which he had set Beeton like a watch-dog, and nothing at all had come of it. The unsuspected Greylands had been left at ease, as always, to do what it would.

Upon Greylands the news fell like a thunderbolt. Had one of those cloud-electric missiles suddenly fallen and shattered the rocks to pieces, it would not have caused more intense astonishment. The Friar's Keep been used as a place of smuggling for untold years!—and Commodore Teague was the head smuggler!—who used to stow away the goods in his big cellar till he could take them away in his spring cart! Greylands knew not how to believe this : and on the

Commodore's score somewhat resented it, for he was an immense favourite. One fact seemed indisputable—the Commodore was not to be seen this morning, and his place was shut up.

The account generally believed was this. Mr. Superintendent Nettleby, observing, after dark had fallen, a suspicious-looking vessel lying nearly close in shore, and having had his attention directed to this same vessel once or twice before, had collected his men and taken up his place in the revenue-boat, under cover of the walls of the Grey Nunnery, and there waited until it was time to drop upon the smugglers : which he did, catching them in the act. Most of the men he surprised were sailors; he knew it by their attire and language: but there was at least one other man (if not two men) who was muffled up for disguise; and there was, without any disguise, working openly, Commodore Teague. The Commodore and these other men—take them at two—had escaped to the ship, and neither the superintendent nor his subordinates knew who they were. The wounded sailor-prisoner was a foreigner, who could speak but few words of English. He gave his name as Jacob Blum, and appeared to know little about the affair, declaring solemnly that he had joined the vessel in Holland only a month before, and was not apprised that she was in the contraband trade. The other man wounded was a Preventive officer.

But Harry Castlemaine—what caused him to be so fatally mixed up with the fight? Lacking an authorized version, the following sprung up. Mr. Harry, promenading about late in the night, with his sweetheart, Jane Hallet (and sly enough she must have been, to have stayed all this while at old Goody Dance's, and never shown herself !) had his ears saluted with the noise and shots going on below. He rushed into the Keep and down the staircase to the vaults beneath (instinct having discovered the stairs to him at the right moment, as was supposed), where he was met and struck down by a stray shot, the fighters not even knowing that he was there. Jane Hallet must have followed him. Sister Mary Ursula's appearance on the scene, as mentioned by the two coast-guardsmen, was accounted for in the same natural manner. She had heard the disturbance from her chamber-window—for of course the noise penetrated as far as the Grey Nunnery—and had gone forth, like a brave, good woman, to ascertain its meaning and see if succour was needed.

All these several reports—which running from one to another, grew into assured facts, as just said, in men's minds—were listened to by Mr. Castlemaine. He found that, as yet, not a shade of suspicion was directed to him or his house: he fervently hoped that it might not be. That would be one sup taken out of his cup of bitterness. Commodore Teague was regarded as the sole offender, so far as Greylands was concerned.

In the course of the morning, making rather more commotion with

its sail than usual, Tom Dance's fishing boat came sailing in : Tom and his son were on board her, and a fair take of fish. The various items of strange news were shouted out to it by half a dozen tongues as soon as it was within hailing distance. Tom gave vent to sundry surprised ejaculations in return, as he found the cable and made the boat fast, and landed with a face of astonishment. The one item that seemed most to stagger him was the state of Mr. Harry Castlemaine.

"It can't be true!" he cried, standing still, while a change passed over his countenance. "Shot by smugglers!—dying!—Mr. Harry Castlemaine!"

Tom Dance's confrères in the fishing trade had no idea but that he had sailed out, in the ordinary way with the night tide. The reader knows that at midnight he was at least otherwise occupied. Tom had done a somewhat daring act. He and his son, alike uninjured in the fray, had escaped in the ship's boats ; and Tom, flinging off his dis-guising cape and cap, his sea boots, and in fact most of his other attire, leaped into the water to swim to his fishing boat, lying on the open beach. It was his one chance of non-discovery. He felt sure that neither he nor Walter had been recognized by Nettleby and his men ; but, if they were to go off to Holland in the ship and so absent themselves from Greylands, it would at once be known that they were the two who had been seen taking part. No man in Greylands was so good a swimmer as Dance ; and—he resolved to risk it. He succeeded. After somewhat of a battle, and the water was frightfully cold, he gained his boat. It had just floated with the in-coming tide. By means of one of the ropes, of which there were several hanging over the side, he climbed on board, put on some of his sea-toggery that was there, and slipped the cable. The anchor was small, not at all difficult for one man to lift ; but Tom Dance wanted to save both time and noise, and it was easiest to slip the cable. The moderate breeze was in his favour, blowing off the land. He hoisted the stay-sail, and was soon nearing the ship, which was already spreading her canvas for flight. From thence Dance took his son on board. They stayed out all night fishing : it was necessary, to give a colouring to things and avert suspicion, and had now, close upon mid-day, come in with a tolerable load of fish. Tom proceeded to land, to gather news and to see which way the wind lay. But he had never thought to hear these sad tidings about Harry Castlemaine.

"It has a'most done me up," Tom said to his son. "He was the finest young fellow in the country, and the freest in heart and hand. And to be struck down like this!"

"How much is known, father?" asked Walter, stopping in his employment of sorting the fish.

"Nothing's known that I can hear," growled Tom Dance, for he was feeling the crossness of affairs just then. "It's all laid on Teague's

back—as Teague always good-naturedly said it would be, if a blow-up came."

"Can Teague ever come back, father?"

"Teague don't want to. Teague has said oftentimes that he'd as soon, or sooner, be over among the Dutch than here. He was always ready for the start, I expect. He'll be writing for us to go over and see him next summer."

"I know he liked them foreign towns: he's often been in 'em," observed Walter. "And he must have feathered his nest pretty well."

"Yes; he won't need to look about him for his pipe and chop of a day. Our chief nest-egg is smashed though, lad. No more secret night-work for us ever again."

"Well, you must have feathered the nest too, father," returned Walter, privately glad that the said night-work was over, for he had never liked it in his heart.

"You just hold your tongue about the feathering of nests," sharply reprimanded Tom. "Once let folks fancy I've got more than fishing would bring in, and they might set on to ask where it came from. Your nest won't be feather'd by me, I can tell ye, young man, unless you keep a still tongue in your head."

"There's no fear of me, father."

"And there'd better not be," concluded Tom Dance. "I'd ship ye off after Teague, short and quick, if I thought there was."

The afternoon was drawing to its close. On the rude couch, more exhausted than he had been in the morning, getting every minute now nearer to death, lay Harry Castlemaine. Relations and friends had taken their leave of him. The poor wife, Jane, only acknowledged to be left, had gone through her last interview with her husband and said her last adieu. Nearly paralyzed with grief, suffering from undue excitement which had been repressed so long, she had relapsed into a state of alarming prostration, that seemed worse than faintness. Mr. Parker administered an opiate, and she was now lying on her old bed above, cared for by Sister Mildred. And the only watcher by his son's bed was Mr. Castlemaine.

Oh, what sorrow was his! The only living being he had greatly cared for in the world dying before his aching eyes. It was for him he had lived, had schemed, had planned and hoped. That nefarious smuggling had been only carried on in reference to Harry's prospective wealth. But for Harry's future position, that Mr. Castlemaine had so longed to establish on a high footing, he had thrown it up long before. It was all over now; the secret work, the hope, and the one cherished life.

"Father, don't!" panted Harry, as Mr. Castlemaine sat catching up ever and anon his breath in sobs, though his eyes were dry. "It may be better for me to go. I used to look forward, I've often done it, to

being a good son to you in your old age : but it may be best as it is."

Mr. Castlemaine could not trust himself to answer.

"And you'll forgive me for all the trouble I've cost you ! As I trust God has forgiven me. I have been thinking of *Him* all day, father."

A terrible sob now. Mr. Castlemaine knew not how to keep down his emotion. Oh, how bitter it was to him, this closing hour, his heart aching with its pain !

"It won't be so very long, father ; you'll be coming, you know : and it is a journey we all must take. What's the matter ? Letting dark !"

Mr. Castlemaine raised his eyes to the window. The light was certainly fading on the panes ; the dusk was stealing over the winter afternoon. Harry could only speak at intervals, and the words came out with long pauses between them. Mr. Castlemaine fancied he was beginning slightly to wander : but a great many of us are apt to fancy that when watching the dying.

"And you'll take care of Jane, father ? Just a little you know, to keep her from being thrown on the world. It's not much she will want : I don't ask it."

The damp hand, lying in Mr. Castlemaine's, was pressed almost to pain ; but there was no other answer. The aching heart was well-nigh unmanned.

"And don't be angry with Marston, father : he only did what I made him do. He is a better man than we have thought him. He was very good to me when he was here to-day, and left me comfort."

Mr. Castlemaine lodged his elbow on his knee, and bent his brow upon his hand. For some time there was silence. Harry, who had none of the restlessness sometimes characteristic of the final scene, lay quite still, his eyes closed.

A very long, deep breath disturbed the silence. It startled Mr. Castlemaine. He looked up, and for a moment loosed the hand he held.

"Harry !"

Harry Castlemaine, his eyes wide open now, raised his head from the pillow. He seemed to be staring at the window-panes with a fixed look, as though he could see the sea that lay beyond, and found something strange in it.

"Father, dear father, it is she !" he burst out in his natural tones and with a deep exulting joy in them. "It is my mother : I know her well. Oh, yes, mother, I am coming ! "

The Master of Greylands was startled. Harry had never seen his mother to remember her ; he knew her only by her picture which hung in one of the rooms, and was a speaking likeness of her. Harry had fallen back again, and lay with a smile upon his face. One more deep

respiration came slowly forth from his lips : it was the last he had to take in this world.

The bereaved father saw what it was, and all his bitter sorrow rose up within him in one long overwhelming agony. He fell upon the unconscious face lying there ; his trial seeming greater than he could bear.

"Oh, Harry, my son ! my son Harry ! Would God I could have died for thee, my son, my son ! "

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ANTHONY.

SOME ten or fifteen years before, Commodore Teague (commodore by courtesy) had taken the Hutt of old Mr. Castlemaine, on whose land it stood. Whether the Commodore had fixed on his abode there with the pre-intention to set up in the contraband trade, so much favoured then and so profitable, or whether the facilities which the situation presented for it, arising from the subterranean passage to the beach, which Teague himself discovered, and which had been unknown to the Castlemaines, first induced the thought, cannot be told. Certain it is, that Teague did organize and embark in it ; and was joined in it by James Castlemaine. James Castlemaine was a young and active man then, ever about ; and Teague probably thought that it would not do to run the risk of being *found out* by the Castlemaines. He made a merit of necessity ; and by some means induced James Castlemaine to join him in the work—to be his partner in it, in fact. Half a loaf is better than no bread, runs the proverb, and the Commodore was of that opinion. His proposal was a handsome one. James Castlemaine was to take half the gross profits ; he, himself, would take the risk, the cost, and the residue of the profits left. Perhaps James Castlemaine required little urging : daring, careless, loving adventure, the prospect presented charms for him that nothing else could have brought. And the compact was made.

It was never disclosed to his father, old Anthony Castlemaine, or to Peter, the banker, or to any other of his kith and kin, his son Harry excepted. Few men plotting against his Majesty's revenues had ever enjoyed so complete an immunity from exposure. James Castlemaine and the Commodore had, to use young Dance's expression, pretty well feathered their nests ; and Tom Dance—who had been taken into confidence from the first, for the help of a strong man was needed by Teague to stow away the cargoes after they were run—had not done amiss in his small way.

It was over now ; the fever and the excitement, the hidden peril and the golden harvest, all had come to an end, and Harry Castlemaine's life had ended with them. Striding over the field path that led to Greylands' Rest, his heart softened almost like a little child's, the tears

running slowly down his cheeks unchecked, went the Master of Greylands from his son's death-bed.

"Is it retribution?" he murmured, lifting his face in the gloom of the evening. "Harry's death following upon Anthony's ere the year is out!"

At this moment he was met by George North. All George's sympathy was with Mr. Castlemaine: he had been feeling truly for him and for Harry during the day; and he stopped to express it.

"Thank you," said Mr. Castlemaine, quite humbly, drawing his hand across his face. "Yes, it is a bitter blow. The world's sunshine has gone out for me with it."

A rapid thought came to George North. What if, in this softened mood, he were to ask for a word of Anthony? If ever the Master of Greylands could be induced to afford information of his fate, it would be now: no other moment might ever occur so favourable as this.

"Forgive me, Mr. Castlemaine. There is a matter that I have long wished to mention to you; a question I would ask: the present, now that we are alone here, and both softened by sorrow—for believe me I do sorrow for your son more than you may suspect—seems to me to be an appropriate time. May I dare to ask it?"

"Ask anything," said the unconscious mourner.

"Can you tell me what became of young Anthony Castlemaine?"

Even in the midst of his anguish, the question gave the Master of Greylands a sharp sting. "What do you know about Anthony Castlemaine?" he rejoined.

"He was my—dear friend," spoke George in agitation. "If you would but tell me, sir, what became of him! Is he really dead?"

"Oh that he were not dead!" cried Mr. Castlemaine, unmanned by the past remembrances, the present pain. "He would have been some one to care for; I might have learnt to love him as my nephew. I have no one left now."

"You have still a nephew, sir?" returned George, deeply agitated, a sure conviction seating itself within him at the last words, that whatever might have been the adverse fate of Anthony, the sorrowing man before him had not helped to induce it. "A nephew who will ask nothing better than to serve you in all affection and duty—if you will but suffer him."

Mr. Castlemaine looked keenly at the speaker in the evening's gloaming. "Where is this nephew?" he inquired, after a pause.

"I am he, sir. I am George Castlemaine."

"You?"

"Yes, Uncle James—if I may dare so to address you. I am poor Anthony's brother."

"And my brother Basil's son?"

"His younger son, Uncle James. They named me George North."

"George North Castlemaine," repeated Mr. Castlemaine, as if wishing to familiarize himself with the name. "And you have been staying here with a view of tracing out Anthony's fate?" he added, quickly arriving at the conclusion, and feeling by rapid instinct that this young man was in good truth his nephew.

"Yes I have, sir. And I had begun to despair of doing it. Is he still living?"

"No, he is dead. He died that fatal February night that you have heard tell of. You have heard tell of the shot: that shot killed him."

In spite of his effort for composure, George allowed a groan to escape his lips. *The Master of Greylands* echoed it.

"George, my nephew, it has been an unlucky year with the Castlemaines," he said in a wailing tone. "Death has claimed three of us: two of the deaths, at least, have been violent, and all of them have been that sudden death we pray against Sunday by Sunday in the Litany. My brother Peter; my nephew Anthony; and now my son!"

The suspicion that had been looming in George's mind since the morning rose to the surface: a suspicion of more curious things than one.

"I think I understand it," he said; "I see it all. In some such affray with the smugglers as occurred last night, Anthony met his death. A shot killed him; as it has now killed another? A smuggler's shot?"

"A smuggler's shot—true. But there was no affray."

"Tell me all, Uncle James," said the young man, his beseeching tone amounting to pain. "Let me share all—the trouble and doings of the past. It shall be hidden in my breast for ever."

"What is it that you suspect?"

"That the smuggling trade was yours: and that the fact accounts for your having been in the Keep that night—for Harry's being there yesterday. Trust me as you have trusted your son, Uncle James: it shall be ever sacred. I will sympathize with you as he has done: am I not a Castlemaine?"

One rapid debate in his mind, and then the Master of Greylands pointed to his garden and led the way to the nearest bench there; the self-same bench that George had sat on to whisper his love-vows to Ethel. He was about to disclose all to this new-found nephew, to whom his esteem and admiration had before been drawn as George North; whom he already liked; nay loved, by one of those subtle instincts rarely to be accounted for. Unless he made a clean breast of all things, the fate of Anthony must in some particulars still remain dark.

He first of all satisfied George upon the one point which has already been declared to the reader: they were the smugglers, the Castlemaines, in conjunction with the originator and active man, Teague: explaining to him how it was that he had been induced to join himself to the practices. And then he went on to other matters.

George Castlemaine sat by his side in the dusky night, and listened to the tale. To more than he had dared to ask, or hope for, or even to think of, that eventful evening. For Mr. Castlemaine entered upon the question of the estate: speaking at first abruptly.

"Greylands' Rest is Anthony's," he said.

"Anthony's!"

"Yes. Or rather yours, now Anthony is gone; but it was his when he came over. It is necessary for me to tell you this at first: one part of the story involves another. My father knew nothing of the smuggling; never had an idea of it; and the money that I gained by it I had to invest quietly from time to time through a London agent; so that he, and others, should not know that I possessed it. A few weeks before my father died, he called me to him one morning to talk about the property——"

"Did he make a will?—I beg your pardon for my interruption, Uncle James," hastily added the young man in apology for what now struck him as rudeness.

"No, he did not make a will. He never made one. My father began that morning to talk to me—'When do you expect Basil, James?' he asked abruptly: and the question unutterably astonished me, for we had not heard from Basil at all, and did not expect him. 'He will come,' said my father: 'he will come. Basil will know that I must be drawing near my end, and he will come over to be ready to take possession here.' 'Leave Greylands' Rest to me, father,' I burst out—for I had been hoping all along that it would be mine after him, on account of what went on in the Friar's Keep. It would not do, unless I gave up that, for me to quit this place, or for a stranger to live at it. I knew Basil of old: he would just as soon have denounced it to the world as not. It was for that reason I wished to have Greylands' Rest. But my father refused absolutely. He would not listen to me. Greylands' Rest must descend to Basil after him, and to Basil's son—if Basil had a son—after *him*. I begged him to let me purchase Greylands' Rest at a fair valuation, and pay over the money to him or invest it for Basil. I said I was attached to the place, having lived in it all my life; whereas Basil had been away from it years and years. I offered to add on to the purchase money any premium that might be named: but the old man laughed, and asked where I was to get the money from. Of course he did not know of my private resources, and I did not dare to allude to them; I brought up Peter's name, saying he would assist me. Peter was rolling in riches then. But it was all

of no use : Basil was the oldest, my father said, the rightful heir, and the estate should never pass over him for one of us. He drew up, himself, a sort of deed of gift, not a will, giving the estate to Basil then ; then, during his own lifetime ; and he charged me, should Basil not have appeared at the time of his demise, to remain in possession and keep it up for him. But he never charged me—mark you, George, he never charged me to seek Basil out. And, for the matter of that we did not know where to seek him.”

Mr. Castlemaine paused to take his hat off and wipe his brow. This confession must be costing him some pain. But for the greater pain at his heart, the hopeless despair that seemed to have fallen on the future, it had never been made.

“ My father died. I, according to his pleasure, remained on, the Master of Greylands’ Rest. People took it for granted it was left to me ; I never gave a hint to the contrary, even to my brother Peter. Peter was getting into embarrassment then with his undertakings of magnitude, and came to me for money to help him. The time went on ; each month as it passed and brought no sign of Basil, no tidings of him, seeming to confirm me more securely in possession of the property. My father had said to me, ‘ Should Basil never reappear to claim it, nor any son of Basil’s, then it will be yours, James.’ Before the first year came to an end, I thought it was mine ; as the second year advanced, it seemed so securely my own that I never gave a thought or a fear to its being taken from me. You may judge then what I felt when some young fellow presented himself one day at Greylands’ Rest, without warning of any kind, saying that Basil was dead, that he was Basil’s son, and had come to claim the property.”

Again the Master of Greylands paused. But this time he remained quite still. George did not interrupt him.

“ When I recal the shame connected with that period, and would fain plead an excuse for myself, I feel tempted to say that the excuse lay in the suddenness of the blow. You must not think me covetous, George Castlemaine : love of money had nothing whatever to do with the assertion to Anthony that Greylands’ Rest was mine. I dreaded to be turned from it. I wanted, at any cost (that of honour you will say) to stay in it. At one of the interviews I had with your brother, I hinted to him that compensation might be made to him for his disappointment, *even to the value of the estate*, for I was rich and did not heed money. But Anthony was a true Castlemaine, I found, Basil’s own son ; for he at once replied that he required only justice : if the estate was his, he must have it ; if not his, he did not want to be recompensed for what he had no claim to. I was angry, mortified, vexed : he kept asking me to show the deed, or the will, by which I held it ; I could not do that, for it would have been seen at once that the property was his, not mine.”

"Perhaps you had destroyed the deed," said George.

"No, I kept it. I have it still. It was always my intention to make restitution sometime, and I kept the deed. My poor son would never have succeeded to Greylands' Rest."

"Who would then?" exclaimed George involuntarily.

"Anthony. I am speaking just now of what my thoughts and intentions were during the brief period of Anthony's sojourn at Greylands. But now listen, George. You must have heard that on the last day of your brother's life we had an encounter in yonder field."

"Oh yes, I have heard of it."

Something indoors had put me frightfully out of temper, and I was in a haughty and angry mood. But as heaven is my judge, I resolved, later on in that afternoon, to make him restitution; to give up to him the estate. After leaving him, I went on; I was I believe in a foaming passion, and walked fast to throw it off. In passing the churchyard, I saw that some one had been flinging some dead sticks on my father's tombstone: you know it, of course: it is the large one of white marble with the iron rails round: and I went in to clear them off. How it was I know not: I suppose heaven sends such messages to all of us; but as I stood there to read the inscription, 'Anthony Castlemaine, of Greylands' Rest,' all the folly and iniquity of my conduct rose up vividly before me. I saw his fine old face before me again, I seemed to hear his voice, enjoining me to hold the estate in trust for Basil, or Basil's son, and relying with the most implicit trust on my honour that I would do this. A revulsion of feeling came over me, my face flushed with its sense of shame. 'Father, I will obey you,' I said aloud; 'before another day shall close, Greylands' Rest shall have passed to young Anthony.' And it should so have passed. Heaven hears me say it, and knows that I would have carried it out."

"I am sure of it," said George, trustingly. It was impossible to doubt the fervent accent, the earnest tone, so redolent of pain.

"I am now approaching that fatal point, the death of Anthony. When I went back home, I sat down to consider of the future. Two plans suggested themselves to me. The one was, to take Anthony into confidence as to the business transacted at the Friar's Keep; the other was to give the business up altogether, so far as I and Harry were concerned, and to make no disclosure of it to Anthony. I rather inclined to the latter course: I had realized a vast deal of money, and did not require more, and I thought it might be as well to get out of it while we were undiscovered. Teague, who had made money also, might give it up, or carry it on on his own score and at his own risk, as he pleased. I thought of this all the evening, and between ten and eleven o'clock, after the household had gone to bed, I went down to Teague's to speak to him about it. I had no particular motive, you understand, for going to Teague at that late hour, the morning would

have been soon enough ; but I had *thought* myself into an impatient, restless mood, and so started off upon impulse. I stayed with Teague, talking, until near half-past eleven, perhaps quite that : no decision was come to, either by me or him, as to our respective course in regard to the trade, but that made no difference to my intended communication to Anthony as to the estate ; and I meant to send for him to Greylands' Rest as soon as breakfast was over on the following morning. Do you believe me ? "

" Fully, Uncle James. I believe every word you say."

" I am telling it before heaven," was the solemn rejoinder. " As in the presence of my dead son."

And that was the first intimation George received that Harry was no more.

" It was, I say, about half-past eleven when I left the Hutt. In turning into Chapel Lane I saw a man standing there, holding on by one of the trees. It was Jack Tuff, one of our working fishermen. He might have noticed me, though I hoped he had not, for you will readily understand that I did not care for the village to know of any night visits I might pay Teague. Upon reaching home I went upstairs to my bureau, and sat for a few minutes, though I really can't say how many, looking over some private papers connected with the trade. Mrs. Castlemaine and the household had, I say, gone to rest. I began to feel tired ; I had not been well for some days ; and shut the papers up until morning. Chancing to look from the window before quitting the room, I saw a vessel at anchor, just in a line with the Chapel ruins. It was a remarkably bright moonlight night. The vessel looked like our vessel ; the one engaged in the contraband trade ; and I knew that if it was so, she had come over unexpectedly, without notice to Teague. Such an occurrence was very unusual, though it had happened once or twice before. I left the house again, passed down Chapel Lane, and went straight over to the Chapel ruins to take a nearer look at the vessel. Yes, I see what you are thinking of, George—your brother and John Beat did see me. Bent's assertion is true : though I did not see them and had no idea that any one was there. One glance was sufficient to show me that it was in truth our vessel. I hastened through the Friar's Keep and ran down the staircase. The cargo was already being run : the boats were up on the beach, and the men were wading through the water with the goods. Teague was not there, nor was Dance or his son : in fact, the sailors had taken us by surprise. Without the delay of a moment, I ran up the subterranean passage to summon Teague, and met him at the other end : he had just seen the anchored vessel. Not many minutes was I away from the beach, George Castlemaine, but when I got back the mischief had been done. Anthony was killed."

" Murdered ? "

"You may call it murder, if you like. His own imprudence, poor fellow, induced it. It would appear—but we shall never know the exact truth—that he must have discovered the staircase pretty quickly, and followed me down. In my haste I had no doubt left the door open. At once he was in the midst of the scene. The boats hauled up there, the goods already landed, the sailors at their hasty work, speaking together in covert whispers, must have told him what it meant. In his honest impulse, but most fatal imprudence, he dashed forward amid the sailor-smugglers. 'I have caught you, you illicit villains!' he shouted, or words to that effect. 'I see what nefarious work you are engaged in : cheating his Majesty's revenue. What, ho ! coastguard !' Before the words had well left his lips, one of the men caught up a pistol, presented it at him, and shot him dead."

Mr. Castlemaine paused. His nephew, George, was silent from agitation.

"The man who shot him was the mate of the vessel, a Dutchman by birth. When Teague and I reached the beach, we saw them all standing over Anthony. He ——"

"He was dead, you say?" gasped George.

"Stone dead. The bullet had gone through his heart. I cannot attempt to tell you what my sensations were ; but I would freely have given all I possessed, in addition to Greylands' Rest, to recal the act. There was a short consultation as to what was to be done with him ; and, during this, one of the men drew a diamond ring from poor Anthony's finger, on which the moonlight had flashed, and put it into my hand. I have it still, shut up in my bureau."

George thought of this very ring—that Charlotte had discovered and told him of. She had been deeming it one conclusive proof against Mr. Castlemaine.

"I spoke of Christian burial for Anthony : but insuperable difficulties stood in the way. It might have led to the discovery of the trade that was carried on ; and Van Stan, the man who killed him, insisted on his being thrown at once into the sea."

George groaned. "Was it done ?"

"It was. Van Stan, a huge, angular fellow he was, with the strength of ten ordinary men, cleared out one of the boats. They lifted Anthony into it ; he was rowed out to sea, and dropped into its midst. I can assure you, George, that for many a day I looked for the sea to cast the body ashore ; but it never has cast it."

"Where is that Van Stan ?"

"Van Stan has died now in his turn. Big and strong giant though he was, to look at, he died in Holland not long after, of nothing but a neglected cold. I ought to have told you," added Mr. Castlemaine, "that Teague went up nearly at once to lock the gate of the Chapel ruins ; and there he saw John Bent pacing about : which made us all

the more cautious below to be as silent as might be. It was our custom to lock that gate when cargoes were being run, both to guard against surprise, and against any one coming into the ruins to look out to sea."

"Teague said the shot that was heard by John Bent and others proceeded from his gun," spoke George. "That was not true?"

"It was not true. That he had been cleaning his gun that night, was so, for when I reached the Hutt, I found him occupied at it. It was also true that he was going out for a sail next day——"

"And were you going with him, as they said?"

"No, I was not. But if I am to tell you all, I must proceed in my own way. I went home that night, when the work was over, with Anthony's fate lying heavily upon me. After a perfectly sleepless night I was disturbed in the early morning by the news that my brother Peter was dead; and I started for Stilborough. In the afternoon, when I came back, I found Greylands in a commotion. Miles, my servant man, told me of the disappearance of Anthony, and he alluded indignantly to the rumours connecting me with it. I had to meet these rumours; prudence necessitated it; and I went to the Dolphin inn, where the people had mostly assembled, taking the Hutt on my way. The Hutt was shut up; Teague was not in yet. On my way onwards I met him, just landed from his boat, and we stayed to exchange opinions. 'Don't let it be known that you were out at all last night, sir,' he said. 'Your man Miles sticks to it that you were not, and so must you.' I should have taken this advice but for one circumstance —in for one lie, in for fifty, you know; and lies I was obliged to tell to turn all scent from the illicit trade. I told Teague that in quitting the Hutt the previous night at half-past eleven, I had seen Tuff in the lane, and he might have recognized me. So my visit to Teague had to be acknowledged and accounted for: it was the safer plan; and in a word or two we settled what the plea should be—that I had gone down to arrange about going for a sail with him the next morning in his yacht. This I spoke of at the Dolphin; but other facts and rumours suggested against me I ignored. It was a terrible time," passionately added Mr. Castlemaine. "I never recal it without pain."

"It must have been," said George in his sympathy.

"Teague went to the Dolphin later, but I had then left the inn. He said that when he heard the people commenting on the shot, instinct prompted him to take it on himself, and he there and then avowed that the report came from his own gun. The scream he denied in toto, insisting upon it that it was but fancy. Would it had been!"

"Would it had been!" echoed George with a groan.

"It was like a fate!" burst forth the Master of Greylands, breaking the distressing pause. "Like a fate, that I should have gone into the Keep that night by way of the Chapel ruins. We always avoided that way of entrance and egress to keep observation from it. Harry, I

know, had used it more than he ought : it was so much more ready a way than going into Teague's and passing through the long passage : but I was always cautioning him. "The young are careless."

"The ghost of the Grey Monk ?" asked George. "Who personated him? Of course I can understand that the farce was kept up to scare the world from the Friar's Keep."

"Just so. The superstition already existed in the village, and we turned it to account. We re-organized the ghost and caused him to show himself occasionally, procuring for the purpose a monk's dress, and a lamp emitting a pale blue flame by means of spirits and salt. Teague and Harry were the actors, sometimes one, sometimes the other. It was an element of fun in my poor boy's life."

"I wish I could comfort you !" whispered George.

"The revenues of the estate have been put by since my father's death : left for such a moment as this : I told you I did not mean to keep possession always. They shall be paid over to you."

"They are not mine, Uncle James. Up to last February they were Anthony's."

"Anthony is dead."

"But he left a wife and child."

"A wife and child ! Anthony! Was it a boy? Perhaps I have spoken too fast."

"It is a girl," said George, not deeming it well to enter on the subject of Madame Guise before the morrow.

The morning saw George at Greylands' Rest, holding further conference with Mr. Castlemaine. The latter knew who Madame Guise was now, and the motive of her residence in his house. He had given up Anthony's ring to George—who would wear it of right now : and had learned that George's present income was nearly a thousand a year : and had promised him Ethel, and told him her fortune was very good.

"The world need never know that Greylands' Rest was Anthony's, Uncle James," George said, wringing his uncle's hand to give force to his argument. "Let it be supposed that the estate was only to lapse to him after Harry—that Harry came in first by my grandfather's will. None can dispute it. And you can make a merit, you know, of giving it up at once to me, not caring to remain here now Harry is gone."

A gleam of light, like a bit of blue sky suddenly shining out of leaden clouds, dawned on Mr. Castlemaine's face. The prospect of tacitly confessing himself a traitor before his fellow men had made a large ingredient in his cup of bitterness.

"It would take a load from me—if—if it may be done," said the Master of Greylands dreamily. "It lies, George, with you. You alone know the truth."

"Then that is settled. Be assured, Uncle James, that I shall never betray it. I shall accustom myself to *think* that it is so ; that I only came in after Harry ; in time I daresay I shall quite believe it."

And so, as George said, it was a settled thing. That version of the affair went abroad, and James Castlemaine's credit was saved.

His credit had also to be saved on another score : the death of Anthony. The fact that he was dead could no longer be kept from the curious neighbourhood : but the Master of Greylands' knowledge of it might still be denied and concealed. The exact truth in regard to his death, the true particulars of it, might be made known : Anthony found his way down to the lower vault of the Friar's Keep that night, had pounced upon the smugglers, then running a cargo ; they had shot him dead, and then flung him into the sea. The smugglers were doing their work alone that night, Commodore Teague not being with them, and they were the sole authors of the calamity. Every word of this was correct, and George would enlighten the world with this, and no more. If questions were put to him as to how he came into possession of the facts, he would avow that the smugglers had confessed it to him, now that their visits to the coast were at an end for ever. The Master of Greylands would hold his own as to his ignorance and innocence : and Mr. John Bent must go on working out the puzzle, of having fancied he saw him that night, to the end.

Neither need Madame Guise be quite entirely enlightened. George, a Castlemaine himself, and jealous of the family's good name, would not, even to her, throw more discredit than need be on his father's brother. He would not tell her that Mr. Castlemaine had been one with the smugglers ; but he would tell her that he knew of the practices and was silent out of regard to Commodore Teague. He would disclose to her the full details of that night, as they occurred, but *not* that Mr. Castlemaine had been at all upon the beach, before Anthony or after him. He would say that when Anthony's fate was disclosed to Mr. Castlemaine, and the ring handed over, the most lively regret and sorrow took possession of him, but to proclaim that he had been made cognizant of it would have done no good whatever, and ruined the Commodore. Well, so far, that was all true, and Charlotte Guise must make the best of it.

Quitting his uncle, George went in search of Ethel ; and found her in the red parlour, alone, and in deep distress. She had loved Harry as a brother.

"My darling, I fear this is a sad trial to you," he said, advancing.

His voice brought to her a start of surprise ; his words caused the tears to flow again. George drew her to him, and she sobbed on his breast.

"You don't know what it is," she said, quite hysterically. "I used to be at times cross and angry with him. And now I find there was

no cause for it ; that he was married all the while. Oh if I had but known !—he should never have heard from me an unkind word."

" Be assured of one thing, Ethel—that he appreciated your words at their proper due only, and laughed at them in his heart. I come from a long talk with Mr. Castlemaine," added George, after a minute's pause, as Ethel drew to the opposite end of the hearth-rug. " I have been asking him for you, Ethel."

" Ye—s ?" she faltered, her eyes glancing up for a moment, and then falling again. " Asking him to-day ? "

" You are thinking that it is not the most appropriate day I could have chosen : and that's true. But, in one sense, I did not choose it. We had future plans of different kinds to discuss, and this one had to come in with them. I come to make a confession to you, Ethel ; to crave your pardon. The name under which I have won you, George North, is not my true name. At least, not all my name. I am a Castlemaine. Mr. Castlemaine's nephew, and that poor lost Anthony's brother."

Ethel looked bewildered. " A Castlemaine !" she repeated. " How can that be ? "

" My dear, it is easy to understand. Mr. Basil Castlemaine, he who settled abroad, was the eldest brother of this house, you know, years ago. Anthony was Basil's elder son, I his younger. I came over to discover what I could of Anthony's fate, and I dropped temporarily the name of Castlemaine, lest my being recognized as one of the family might impede my search. My Uncle James condones it all ; and I believe he thinks that I was justified. I have now resumed my name—George North Castlemaine."

Ethel drew a deep breath. She was trying to recover her astonishment.

" Would it pain you very much, Ethel, to know that you would make no change in your residence?—that you would spend your life at Greylands' Rest ? "

" I—do not understand you," she faintly said, a vision of remaining under Mrs. Castlemaine's capricious control for ever, and of being separated from *him*, rushing over her like an ugly nightmare.

" Greylands' Rest is to be my home in future, Ethel. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine leave it——"

" Yours ! —your own ?" she interrupted in excitement. " This house ! Greylands' Rest ? "

" Yes ; my own. It is mine now. I come in after Harry," he added very hurriedly, to cover the last sentence, which had slipped out inadvertently : " and my uncle resigns it to me at once."

" Oh dear," said Ethel, more and more bewildered. " But it would cost so much to live *here*."

" Not more than I can afford to spend," he answered with a smile.

"But—is Anthony really dead?"

"Ay. I will tell you about it later. The present question is, Ethel, whether you will share my home here at Greylands' Rest?"

He spoke with a smile, crossed over, and stood before her on the shabby old hearth-rug. Just one moment of maiden hesitation, of a sweet rising blush, and she bent forward to the arms that were opened to encircle her.

"One home together here," he fondly murmured, bending his face on hers. "One heaven hereafter."

C H A P T E R X X X V I I .

NO TURNING BACK.

THE days had passed on, and poor Harry Castlemaine lay in his grave in the churchyard.

Mary Ursula, in the deep mourning robes worn for him, was sitting in the parlour at the Grey Nunnery, the little Marie on her knee. Since she knew who this child was—a Mary Ursula, like herself, and a Castlemaine—a new interest had arisen for her in her heart. She was holding the little one to her, looking into her face, and tracing the resemblance to the family. A great resemblance there undoubtedly was: the features were the clearly-cut Castlemaine features, the eyes were the same dark lustrous eyes; and Mary almost wondered that the resemblance had never previously struck her.

Madame Guise (as well retain the name to the last) was about to return to her own land with her child, escorted thither by George Castlemaine. It was not to be a perpetual separation, for Charlotte had faithfully promised to come over at least once in three years to stay with George and Ethel at Greylands' Rest, so as to give her child the privilege of keeping up relations with the Castlemaine family. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine were losing no time in their departure from Greylands' Rest. During the winter they would remain in London, and travel on the Continent later in the year. In the spring George was to go to London for his marriage, and bring Ethel home.

"Marie must not forget her English," said Mary Ursula, pressing a kiss on the child's face.

"Marie not forget it, lady."

"And Marie is to come sometimes and see her dear old friends here; mamma says so; and Uncle George will—"

"A gentleman to see you, madam."

Little Sister Phœby had opened the parlour door with the announcement, and was showing in one whom, of all the world, Mary would have least expected to see—Sir William Blake-Gordon. He came forward, holding out his hand with trepidation, his utterly colourless face betraying his inward emotion. Mary rose, putting down the child, and

mechanically suffered her hand to meet his. Sister Phoeby beckoned to the little girl, and shut the door.

"Will you pardon my unauthorized intrusion?" he asked, putting his hat on the table, and taking a chair near hers. "I feared to write and ask permission to call lest you should deny it to me."

"I should not have denied it—no; my friends are welcome here," replied Mary, feeling just as agitated as he, but successfully repressing its signs. "You have, no doubt, some good reason for seeking me."

She spoke with one of her sweetest smiles: the smile that she was wont to give to her best friends. How well he remembered it!

"You have heard—at least I fancy you must have heard—some news of me," resumed Sir William, speaking with considerable embarrassment and hesitation. "It has been made very public."

Mary coloured now. About a fortnight before, Mr. Knivett had told her that the projected marriage of Sir William with Miss Mountsorrel was at an end. The two lovers had quarrelled and parted. Sir William sat looking at Mary, either waiting for her answer, or because he hesitated to go on.

"I heard that something had occurred to interrupt your plans," said Mary. "It is only a temporary interruption, I trust."

"It is a lasting one," he said; "and I do not wish it to be otherwise. Oh, Mary!" he added, rising in agitation, "you know, you must know, how hateful it was to me! I entered into it to please my father; I never had an iota of love for her. Love! the very word is desecrated in connection with what I felt for Miss Mountsorrel. I really and truly had not even friendship for her; I could not feel it. When we parted I felt like a man who has been relieved from some heavy weight of dull despair: it was as though I had shaken off a felon's chains."

"What caused the parting?" questioned Mary, feeling that she must say something.

"Coolness caused it. For the very life of me I was unable to behave to her as I ought—as I suppose she had a right to expect me to behave. Since my father's death I had been more distant than ever, for I could not help remembering the fact that, had I held out against his will until then, I should have been free; and I resented it bitterly in my heart. Resented it on her, I fear. She reproached me with my coolness one day—some two or three weeks ago, it is. One word led to another; we had a quarrel and she threw me up."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Mary.

"Can you say that from your heart?"

He put the subdued question so pointedly, and there was so wistful an expression of reproach in his face that she felt confused. Sir William came up close, and took her hands.

"You know what I am here for," he cried, his voice hoarse with

agitation. "I should have come a week ago but that it was the period of your deep mourning. Oh, Mary ! let it be with us as it used to be ! There can be no happiness for me in this world apart from you. Since the day of my father's death I have never ceased to—to—I had almost said to *curse* the separation that he forced upon us ; or, rather, to curse my weakness in yielding to it. Oh, my darling, forgive me !—my early and only love, forgive me ! Come home to me, Mary, and be my dear wife !"

The tears were running down her face. Utterly unnerved, feeling how entirely the old love was holding sway in her heart, she let her hands lie in his.

"I am not rich, as you know, Mary ; but we shall have enough for comfort. Your position at least, as Lady Blake-Gordon, will be assured, and neither of us cares for riches. Our tastes are alike simple. Do you remember how we both used to laugh at undue parade and show ?"

"Hush, William ! Don't tempt me."

"Not tempt you ! My dear one, you must be mine. It was a sin to separate us : it would be a worse sin to prolong the separation now that impediments are removed."

"I cannot turn back," she said. "I have cast my lot in here, and must abide by it. I—I—seem to see—to see more surely and clearly day by day as the days go on"—she could scarcely speak for agitation—"that God Himself has led me to this life ; that he is showing me, hour by hour, how to be more useful in it. I may not quit it now."

"Do you recal the fact, Mary, that your father *gave* you to me ? It was his will that we should be man and wife. You cannot refuse to hear my prayer."

None knew, or ever would know, what that moment was to Mary Ursula : how strong was the temptation that assailed her ; how cruelly painful to resist it. But while seductive love showed her the future, as his wife, in glowing colours, reason forbade her yielding to it. Argument after argument against it crowded into her mind. She had cast in her lot with these good ladies ; she had made the poor, patient community, struggling before with need and privation, happy with her means. How could she withdraw those means from them ? She had, in her own heart, and doing it secretly as to Christ, taken up her cross and her work in this life that she had entered upon. When she embraced it, she embraced it for ever : to turn away from it now would be like a mockery of heaven. Involuntarily there arose in her mind a warning verse of Holy Writ, strangely applicable. She thought it might almost have been written for her ; and a breathed word of silent prayer went up from her heart that she might be helped and strengthened.

"You know, Mary, that Mr. Peter Castlemaine——"

"Just a moment, William," she interrupted, lifting her hand pleadingly. "Let me think it out."

There were worldly reasons also why she should not yield, she went on to reflect: ay, and perhaps social ones. What would the public say if, during this temporary estrangement from Agatha Mountsorrel, this trumpery quarrel, she were to seize upon him again with indecent haste, and make him her own? What would her own sense of right say to it?—her maidenly propriety?—her untarnished spirit of honour? No, it could not be: the world might cry shame on her, and she should cry it on herself. Sir William Blake-Gordon interrupted her with his impassioned words. This moment, as it should be decided, seemed to be to him as one of life or death.

"William, hush!" she said, gazing at him through her blinding tears, and clasping his hands, in which hers still rested, almost to pain in her mind's anguish. "It may not be."

"Sit you down, my love, and be calm. I am sure you are hardly conscious of what you say. Oh, Mary, reflect! It is our whole life's happiness that is at stake: yours and mine."

They sat down side by side; and when her emotion had subsided, she told him why it might not, giving all the reasons for her decision, and speaking quietly and firmly. He pleaded as though he were pleading for life itself, as well as its happiness; but he pleaded in vain. All the while she was repeating to herself that verse of warning, as it she dreaded letting it go from her for a moment.

"We will be as dear brother and sister, William, esteeming each other unto our lives' end, and meeting occasionally. You will still marry Agatha——"

"Mary!"

"Yes, I think it will be so; and I hope and trust you will be happy together. I am sure you will be."

"Our time is short enough to-day, Mary. Do not waste it in these idle words. If you knew how they grate on me!"

"Well, I will leave that. But you must not waste your life in impossible thoughts of me and of what might have been. It would render impracticable our intercourse as friends. Thank you for what you have come this day to say: it will make my heart happier when its tumult and agitation shall be over."

Once more, by every argument in his power to call up, by the deep love and despair at his heart, he renewed his pleading. But it did not answer. The interview was prolonged to quite an unusual period, and was painful on both sides, but it terminated at length, and when William Blake-Gordon left her presence he left it as her lover for ever.

CONCLUSION.

WINTER had passed: summer had come round again. Greylands basked in the light and heat of the June sun; the sea lay sleeping under the fishing-boats.

There's not much left to tell. Greylands' Rest had its new inmates: George Castlemaine and his wife. Ethel told her secrets to her husband now, instead of to the sea: but they both were fond of sitting on the high cliffs together and watching its waves. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine were somewhere abroad, intending to stay there until autumn: and Miss Flora was where poor Harry always said she ought to be—at a good school. Mr. Castlemaine had decided the point, in spite of the opposition of his wife.

Jane Hallet—old names stand by us—had taken up her abode again with her aunt, in the pretty home on the cliff. It would probably be her dwelling-place for life. Unless, indeed, she carried out the project she had been heard once to mention—that, whenever her aunt should be called away, she hoped to join the community of the Grey Sisters. Very sad and gentle and subdued did Jane look in her widow's cap. There was a little stone now in the churchyard to the memory of "Jane, infant child of Henry Castlemaine :" it had been placed there, unasked, by the Master of Greylands; and just as Jane used to steal down the cliff in the dusk of evening to meet her husband, so did she now often steal down at the same silent hour to weep over the graves of her child and its father, lying side by side. Not yet did Greylands, as a rule, give her her true name: old names, it has been just observed, stand by us; and Hallet, as applied to Jane, was more familiar to the tongue than Castlemaine. The income settled on Jane by Mr. Castlemaine, was ample for every comfort: she and her aunt now lived as quiet gentle-people, keeping a good servant. Jane had dropped her intimacy with Miss Susan Pike; though she would stay and speak cordially to her when by chance they met. Which implied distance, or reserve, or whatever it might be, was not at all agreeable to that damsel, and she consoled herself by telling Greylands that Jane was "stuck-up." Little cared poor Jane. Her young life had always been a sad one: and now, before she was twenty years of age, its happiness had been blighted out of it. George Castlemaine and his wife were becoming fond of Jane: Ethel had always liked her. Jane visited them now sometimes; and Greylands was shown that they respected and regarded her.

"It is as it should be: Jane's manner and ways were always too high for her pocket—as are Miss Hallet's too, for that matter—but it's all right now," remarked Mrs. Bent to her husband, one day that they sat sunning themselves on the bench outside the inn, and saw Jane pass with Ethel. John only nodded in reply. With the elucidation of the fate of Anthony Castlemaine, and the delivering over of his effects to

the widow, Charlotte Guise, John's mind was at rest, and he had returned to his old easy apathy. By dint of much battling with strong impressions, John had come to the conclusion that the tall man he saw cross from the Chapel Lane to the ruins that February night might have been one of the smugglers on his way from the Hutt, who bore some extraordinary resemblance to the Master of Greylonds. Jack Tuff held out still that it was he; but Jack Tuff was told his eyesight could not always be trusted.

News came from Commodore Teague pretty often. He appeared to be flourishing in his new abode over the water, and had set up a pleasure-boat on the Scheldt. He sent pressing messages for Greylonds to visit him; and Tom Dance and his son intended to avail themselves of the invitation. The Commodore inquired after old friends, even to the ghost of the Grey Monk, whether it "walked" as much as it used to walk, or whether it didn't. The Hutt remained without a tenant. Not a soul would take it. Events had severely shaken the bravery of Greylonds; the ghost had shown itself much in the last year, and the Hutt was too near its haunting place, the Friar's Keep, to render it a comfortable residence. So it remained untenanted, and was likely to remain so. Greylonds would almost as soon have parted with its faith in the Bible as in the Grey Monk.

And the participation of the Master of Greylonds in those illicit practices was not disclosed or suspected, and the name and reputation of the Castlemaines had never a tarnish on it. It was believed that he had behaved in a remarkably handsome and liberal manner to his nephew, George, in giving up to him Greylonds' Rest during his own lifetime; George himself spoke feelingly of it: and what with that, and what with the sympathy felt for the loss of his son, and what with regret for the suspicions cast on him in regard to Anthony, Mr. Castlemaine stood high in men's estimation.

And she—Mary Ursula? Some further good fortune had come to her in the shape of money. A heavy debt, due to her father since long years, which had been looked upon as a total loss, was suddenly repaid. It amounted, with the interest, to many thousands of pounds. As Mr. Peter Castlemaine had himself not a creditor in the world, all his obligations having been paid in full, it lapsed of course to his daughter. So, even on the score of fortune, she might not have been so unequal a match for Sir William Blake-Gordon. Sir William, knowing how utterly at an end was all hope of Mary, had, after some tardy delay, renewed his engagement with Miss Mountsorrel: and this month of June they had been married. Mary sent them a loving letter of good wishes, and a costly present: and she told them that she and they should always be the best of friends.

She was too rich now, she was wont to say, laughingly, to the Sisters: and she introduced some changes for comfort into the Nunnery. One

of the rooms hitherto shut up, a spacious apartment with the lovely sea view, she had caused to be renovated and furnished for the Ladies, leaving the parlour still as the reception-room. A smaller apartment with the same sea aspect was fitted up for herself, and her own fine piano placed in it : the Superior's private sitting-room. Sister Mildred had not enjoyed this almost necessary accommodation : but Sister Mildred had neither the means nor had she been educated with the tastes of Mary Ursula. The door leading from the Nunnery into the secret passage was bricked-up for ever.

A grand, stately Superior-mistress made Miss Castlemaine ; and the Grey Ladies, under her wise and gracious sway, enlarged their sphere of benevolence. Using her means, they sought out their fellow-pilgrims, entangled amid the thorns of this world, and helped them on the road to a better. For herself, though anxiously fulfilling all the social obligations of her sphere here, she kept her feet and her heart set ever towards the eternal shore. And if—for she was but human—a regret came over her for the position she had persisted in resigning, or a vision rose of the earthly bliss that would have been hers as William Blake-Gordon's wife, that one verse of the loving MASTER'S, delivered to his people during his sojourn on earth, was sure to suggest itself for her consolation. As it had come into her mind, uncalled for and unbidden, during that hour of her temptation, so would it return to cheer and comfort her now.

“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

THE END.



WESTMINSTER WINDOW-GARDENING.

TH E passion for flowers is born equally with citizen and peasant. It is pretty and picturesque to watch the country children gather wantonly and cast aside these

“ Stars that in earth’s firmament do shine,”

but it is affecting to see those of the town tend and treasure their one flower—their Picciola—with enduring love. The child bred in a London back-slum rejoices more in the weak blossom he has nourished than in the jewels studding the garments of a Persian Shah; and no wonder; for the diamond, however priceless, is but a clear, cold gem, while the flower lives and grows. And this pure taste is not lost with childhood. Men and women happily preserve it, and its nurture tends to elevate a soul, however debased, and to raise it to the God who created the flower.

The encouragement of window gardening helps to cherish this heaven-born instinct, and the annual flower-show in the college garden at Westminster proves what such encouragement can effect. Perhaps a brief description of it may stimulate to the support of similar institutions elsewhere.

We thread the long, cool cloisters of Westminster school, wandering now right, now left, until we find ourselves in the college garden. This is, in some sort, a close, in part surrounded by the grey dormitories of the scholars and the red dwellings of church dignitaries or scholastic masters. These are, however, half hidden by trees or covered by parasitical plants, so that at intervals nothing but the reposeful green of nature is visible. Birds are singing, as if domesticated in the trees, and unconscious that without roll, in unceasing measure, the heavy wheels of the din of Westminster; or that above, solemnly surveying the scene, rise sublime the grey, grand towers of its abbey and the high clock tower of its Houses of Parliament. Strange to glance from the lowly white tent enshrining the humble flowers of the window gardeners, to the lofty summits of these memorable structures, filled at the moment with worshippers, statesmen, and sight-seers.

We, too, are sight-seers. While the grounds are yet comparatively empty we survey the tent. Here is a long array of flowers, tier above tier, brought from streets, courts, and alleys of which we have not before heard—from windows, possibly ill-glazed, and rooms probably ill-ventilated. Yet “clean” is the expression we hear everywhere. The flowers are clean. This is high praise. There is no symptom of soot, smoke, or grime on leaf or blossom. They have been so carefully nurtured that the close, dank atmosphere has not harmed them. Like

children simply fed and persistently washed, they have flourished on daily watering and tending. Here is a wealth of well-trained fuchsias, geraniums single and double, sweet-williams, balsams, calceolarias, hydrangeas, nasturtiums, musk, carnations—all *clean*. Here are many specimens of a trailing plant with small, bright yellow blossoms, which, we are told, has many names—creeping jinnies and roving sailors are two of them. This flower seems indigenous to London windows, bravely surmounting all atmospheric influences, and looking cheerful in spite of soot or bad air. Happy example to us all! Here is one small fairy rose. There may be others, but we see only this. What a treasure the tiny gem must be to some toiling and tasteful cultivator! It reminds us of a group of ragged children in a suburban hayfield, who had happened on a solitary wild rose-bush, and found two blossoms. Guarding these jealously, they went off in search of more, singing, with a joyous but touching cheeriness, “We’re all going a rosing, a rosing, a rosing.”

Although “clean” is an appropriate word of praise for these window-flowers, they deserve others: for they look strong, healthy, and well-trained, and many are large of growth and rich in blossom. All show a meritorious attempt to reach perfection. Round each pot is a paper on which is inscribed the name and address of the owner, in writing of various styles; from the carefully formed characters of the artizan, to the straggling letters of the child. The names of the contributors and of the streets, squares, courts, and alleys where they reside, are varied indeed. We read, side by side, “North Peabody Square,” and “College Mews,” suggestive of American philanthropy and collegiate equestrianism—we read all sorts of strange addresses, and wish that a prize could make its way to each. But that would be impossible. As it is, the prizes seem more numerous than the blanks; for the cards announcing them show everywhere amongst the flowers. Not only are the united parishes of St. Stephen and St. John, Westminster, represented, but others, external to the society. One portion of the tent is reserved for “the sick and weary of a hospital,” and we pause to call up the wan faces and trembling hands that have watched and touched the flowers, and the sufferers who have been for awhile allured from pain—

“To win the secret of a weed’s plain heart.”

The tent and grounds fill by degrees. The society is supported by the shilling entrance tickets of the rich and the penny fees of the poor. The former have the precedence, and rank and fashion arrive to shed the halo of costly dress, beauty, light, and colour on the antique college garden. Amongst them are some turbaned orientals, one of whom is accompanied by a lady in a rich drapery of gold and scarlet tissue, arranged in Eastern fashion. This appears to be a large fringed scarf, thrown across the black hair, and wound gracefully round the body.

The Asiatics are, apparently, not strangers, but converse easily with many of the company, and seem much interested in all that passes. We hear the word "Archbishop," and turn to recognize the Archbishop of Canterbury. Dean Stanley has been present from the first ; so have other abbey celebrities—for the success of the poor depends on the aid and countenance of the rich.

Meanwhile, the band of the A division of police performs, with precision and animation, operatic airs, quadrilles, gavottes, galops, and valses. The force must be roused on their monotonous beat by such cheerful music, and the multitude who throng in at 5.30, are duly alive to its merit. A concourse of men, women, and children, suddenly fill up the outskirts of the grounds, and we become more and more animated. These are the inhabitants of Westminster, admitted annually *ad libitum*, to the "cool, sequestered" shades of its college garden. We see them gazing—not enviously we hope—at the gorgeous dresses of the ladies, and at the humbler flowers of their compeers. We are told that they look forward to this day as one of great enjoyment, and are happy in being brought into collision with the upper ten. We will hope it is so.

There is a murmur of "Did you see the Earl?" We did not see him, but with the selfishness of egotism, succeed in securing places near the temporary rostrum where he is to be. Our example is soon followed, and the crowd thickens around. Piles of bright books appear—and these are soon followed by the Earl of Shaftesbury, ever foremost in works for the good of his fellow creatures. The distribution of prizes begins at once.

Lord Shaftesbury stands in his open-air pulpit, while a gentleman on his right calls out, "Half a crown and a handsome book for the best geranium," together with the name and address of the winner. This formula continues, with certain variations, throughout the proceedings, and is followed by the appearance of the successful competitors from amongst the outer crowd of the lower million. Each mounts, successively, the platform on the right, passes before Lord Shaftesbury, receives the prize, moves on to the left, descends, and again vanishes into the mass. It would be as impossible to over rate the interest of this simple ceremony as to enumerate or describe the prize-holders. Here are feeble old men and women, brawny artizans, mothers with infants in their arms, and children of all ages, as happy at receiving the reward for the tender cherishing of a flower, as would be many a warrior at being endowed with an Order of Merit, after a victory. It is pleasant to see the faces of the aged kindle into light as Lord Shaftesbury shakes their hands cordially : pleasant to see the lined brows of the workers relax at his kindly words and touch ; pleasant to watch the smiles of the young as he pats them on the head and cheek. The prize is received without demonstration, but the accompanying brotherly love

meets with instant response. Sympathy is sweeter than a dole. Here are children so small that they are lifted to the pulpit, and stand face to face with the Earl. He presses their cheeks in his hands and hopes they are going to be good. Their confidential look of assent is more telling than promises. One or two cripples are helped up the steps by some dignitary on one side, and down by Dean Stanley, seated on the mimic stage, on the other. How kindly the ministering policemen and bystanders hand them through the crowd! After all there is more softness than hardness in the human heart.

When the numberless books and small sums of money are distributed, and the gratified recipients have retired, the customary addresses and votes of thanks follow. Now the rear ranks press into the van, and class really mingles with class. We see the richly and the poorly clad together, all eagerly listening for the words that fall from the lips of the speakers. It is difficult to catch them, however, for the crowds of children are making such a hullabaloo with their games and dances that they are well-nigh lost except to the few close at hand. They are to the purpose and not "long drawn out," which is more than can be said of all speeches. As such, we leave them to the imagination of the reader. "Three cheers for the Dean and Lady Augusta Stanley," are noteworthy, for they are the mainstays of the Society, and without such supports deserving institutions decline. Lord Shaftesbury has just said in his address, that whereas he was formerly called upon to preside at numbers of similar gatherings he has this year been present only at two. Judging from this of Westminster, we should be inclined to lament with his lordship, over any falling-off in so interesting and refining a pursuit as the cultivation of God's loveliest gift to man—flowers.

The day has been one of sunshine and blue sky, no clouds, no showers. Just as the cool of evening floats in, the garden is rapidly shorn of its hot-house plants. As if by magic the many-hued ladies disappear to the carriages that block up Dean's Yard, and are replaced by the more sombre crowd. As the light of the one fades, we wander into the shade of the other. The college garden is abandoned to the working classes of Westminster, who roam in and out of the tent, walk or sit about, and enjoy themselves: at least, we hope they enjoy themselves; for there is a subdued, care-worn, toil-lined expression on most of the faces, when in repose, scarcely suggestive of enjoyment. Still they light up wonderfully as by a sudden sunbeam at a kindly act or word, and if the gleam is transient, we feel that it *can* kindle them. Oh! let the rich strive to make it enduring.

If, however, noise is proof of happiness, the children, at least, are happy. Their mirth fills the air, and they roll and race about on the green sward as briskly as if they were used to it. Here and there, nevertheless, are little faces troubled by disappointment. Thei

owners are tenderly embracing a flower-pot, and gazing dejectedly at a plant. On inquiring we hear, "I have tried three years, and I thought to have a prize. I have watered it night and morning!" There is a touch of pathos in the simple words which reach the heart. We give the best advice we can : "Try again! You will be more fortunate next year." A bright smile replaces the dejection, and sudden hope banishes despondency. They promise to "Try again," and are happy once more.

We stand to watch the prize-flowers carried off triumphantly by their owners, through a door at the extremity of the grounds. We note another watcher. A small boy on crutches, very small and very poor. He has been left near the door, and cannot move unaided, apparently. He tells us he is waiting for his sister to take him to the tent—"watching and waiting," with large, anxious, black eyes, a little withered form, and on crutches! God help him. A good lady gives him a coin : the large eyes brighten, and the tiny cripple is also happy.

As the prizes have we think, outnumbered the blanks in this "eighth annual flower-show," we venture to believe that it has been a source of innocent pleasure to most, if not to all, who have thronged the college garden to-day.

ANNE BEALE.



THE GENTIAN.

HIGH on the mountain's rocky brow,
With snow and ice around it spread,
'Mid storms and tempests fierce and wild
The gentian lifts its lovely head.

Peaceful and trustfully it smiles
Though lightning flash and thunder rage ;
Its deep blue bell of sapphire pure
Gleams gem-like upon Nature's page.

When faint from climbing the steep side
Of some precipitous ascent,
In gazing on thy purple bloom
The pilgrim oftentimes finds content.

So 'mid this world of care and strife,
The weary heart in vain seeks peace,
Till Hope its heavenly flower unfolds,
And bids the angry conflict cease.

E. B.

MRS. TODHETLEY'S EARRINGS.

IT was January weather, cold and bright, the sun above head and the white snow on the ground. Mrs. Todhetley had been over to Timberdale Court, to the christening of Robert and Jane Ashton's baby. The Mater went to represent Mrs. Coney, who was Godmother. Jane was not strong enough to sit out a christening dinner, and that was to be given later. After some midday feasting the party dispersed.

I went out to help Mrs. Todhetley from the carriage when she got back. The Squire had gone to Pershore for the day. It was only three o'clock, and the sun quite warm in spite of the snow.

"It is so fine, Johnny, that I think I'll walk to the school," she said as she stepped down. "It may not be like this to-morrow, and I must see about those shirts."

The school was making Tod a set of new shirts: and some bother had arisen about them. Orders had been given for large plaits in front, when Tod suddenly announced that he'd have the plaits small.

"Only——can I go as I am?" cried Mrs. Todhetley, suddenly stopping in indecision, as she remembered her fine clothes: a silver-grey gown that shone like silver, white shawl of china crape, and be-feathered bonnet.

"Why, yes, of course you can go as you are, good mother. And look all the nicer for it."

"I fear the children will stare! But then—if the shirts get made wrong! Well, will you go with me, Johnny?"

We reached the school-house, I waiting outside while she went in. It was that time of strike that I told you of before, when Eliza Hoar died of it. The strike was in full swing still; the men looked discontented, the women miserable, the children pinched.

"I don't know what in the world Joseph will say!" cried Mrs. Todhetley as we were walking back. "Two of the shirts are finished with the large plaits. I ought to have seen about it earlier: but I did not think they would begin them quite so soon.—We'll just step into Mrs. Coney's, Johnny, as we go home. I must tell her about the christening."

For Mrs. Coney was a prisoner from an attack of rheumatism. It had kept her from the festivity. She was asleep, however, when we got in: and Mr. Coney thought she had better not be disturbed, even for the news of the little grandson's christening, as she had lain awake all the past night in pain.

"Why, Johnny! who's that?"

Leaning against the gate of our house, in the red light of the setting

sun was an elderly woman, dark as a gipsy. "A tramp," I whispered, noticing her poor clothes.

"Do you want anything, my good woman?" asked Mrs. Todhetley. She was half kneeling in the snow, and lifted her face at the words: a sickly face, that somehow I liked now I saw it close. Her tale was this. She had set out from her home, three miles off, to walk to Worcester, word having been sent her that her daughter, who was in service there, had met with some accident. She had not been strong of late, and a faintness came over her as she was passing the gate. But for leaning on it she must have fallen.

"You should go by train: you should not walk," said Mrs. Todhetley.

"I had not the money just by me, ma'am," she answered. "It 'ud cost two shillings or half a crown. My daughter sent word I was to take the train and she'd pay for it: but she did not send the money, and I'd not got it just handy."

"You live at Islip, you say. What is your name?"

"Nutt'n, ma'am," said the woman in the local dialect. Which name I interpreted into Nutten; but Mrs. Todhetley thought she said Nutt.

"I think you are telling me the truth," said the Mater, some hesitation in her voice, though. "If I were assured of it I would advance you half a crown for the journey."

"The good Lord above us knows that I'm telling it," returned the woman earnestly, turning her face full to the glow of the sun. "It's more than I could expect you to do, ma'am, and me a stranger; but I'd repay it faithfully."

Well, the upshot was that she got the half-crown lent her; and I ran in for a sup of warm ale. Molly shrieked out at me for it, refusing to believe that the mistress gave any such order, and saying she was not going to warm ale for parish tramps. So I got the ale and the tin, and warmed it myself. The woman was very grateful, drank it, and disappeared.

"Joseph, I am so very sorry! They have made two of your shirts, and the plaits are the large ones you say you don't like."

"Then they'll just unmake them," retorted Tod, flying out.

We were sitting round the table at tea, Mrs. Todhetley having ordered some tea to be made while she went upstairs. She came down without her bonnet, and had changed her best gown for the one she mostly wore at home: it had two shades in it and shone like the copper tea-kettle. The Squire was not expected home yet, and we were to dine an hour later than usual.

"That Miss Timmens is not worth her salt," fired Tod, helping himself to two slices of thin bread-and-butter. "What business had she to go and make my shirts wrong?"

"I fear the fault lies with me, Joseph, not with Miss Timmens. I had given her the pattern shirt, which has large plaits, you know, before you said you would prefer—oh, we hardly want the lamp yet, Thomas?" broke off the Mater, as old Thomas came in with the lighted lamp.

"I'm sure we do, then," cried Tod. "I can't see which side's the butter and which the bread."

"And I, not thinking Miss Timmens would put them in hand at once, did not send to her as soon as you spoke, Joseph," went on the Mater, as Thomas settled the lamp on the table and its light went gleaming around. "I am very sorry, my dear: but it is only two. The rest shall be done as you wish."

Something, apart from the shirts, had put out Tod. I had seen it as soon as we got in. For one thing, he had meant to go to Pershore: and the Pater, not knowing it, started without him.

"Let them unmake the two," growled Tod.

"But it would be a great pity, Joseph. They are very nicely done; the stitching's beautiful. I really don't think it will signify."

"*You* don't, perhaps. You may like odd things. A pig with one ear, for example."

"A what, Joseph?" she asked, not catching the last simile.

"I said a pig with one ear. No doubt you do like it. You are looking like one now, ma'am."

The words made me gaze at Mrs. Todhetley, for the tone told that they bore some personal meaning, and then I saw what Tod meant: an earring was absent. The lamp-light shone on the flashing diamonds, the bright pink topaz of the one earring; but the other ear was bare and empty.

"You have lost one of your earrings, mother."

She clapped her hand on her two ears in succession, and started up in alarm. These earrings were very valuable; they had been left to her, when she was a child, in some old lady's will, and constituted her sole possession in jewelry worth boasting of. Not once in a twelve-month did she venture to put them on; but she had got them out to-day for the christening.

Whether it was that I had gazed at the earrings when I was a little fellow and sat in her lap, I don't know; but I never saw any that I liked so well. The pink topaz was in a long drop, the slender rim of gold that encircled it being set with diamonds. Mrs. Todhetley said they were worth fifty guineas: and perhaps they were. The glittering and gleaming of the diamonds round the pink, was beautiful to look upon.

The house went into a commotion. Mrs. Todhetley made for her bedroom, to see whether the earring had dropped on the floor or was lodging inside her bonnet. She shook out her grey dress, hoping it had

fallen amid the folds. Hannah searched the stairs, candle in hand ; the two children were made to stand in corners for fear they should tread on it. But the search came to nothing. It seemed clear enough that the earring was not in the house.

"Did you notice, Johnny, whether I had them both in my ears when we went to the school?" the Mater asked.

No, I had not. I had seen them gleaming when she got out of the carriage, but had not noticed them after.

I went out to search the garden path that she had traversed, and the road over to the Coneys' farm. Tod helped me, forgetting his shirts and his temper. Old Coney said he remarked the earrings while Mrs. Todhetley was talking to him, and thought how beautiful they were. That is, he had remarked *one* of them ; he was sure of that ; and he thought if the other had been missing, its absence would have struck him. But that was just saying nothing ; for he could not be certain both had been there.

"You may hunt till to-morrow morning and get ten lanterns to it," cried Molly in her tart way, meeting us by the bay tree, as we went stooping up the path again ; "but you'll be none the nearer finding it. That tramp's got the earring."

"What tramp?" demanded Tod, straightening himself.

"A tramp that Master Johnny there must needs give hot ale to," returned Molly. "I know what them tramps be worth. They'd pull rings out of ears with their own fingers, give 'em the chance : and perhaps this woman did, without the missis seeing her."

Tod turned to me for an explanation. I gave it, and he burst into a derisive laugh, meant for me and the Mater. To think we could be taken-in by such a tale as that ! he cried : we should never see tramp, or half-crown, or perhaps the earring again.

The Squire came home in the midst of the stir. He blustered a little, partly at the loss, chiefly at the encouragement of tramps, calling it astounding folly. Ordering Thomas to bring a lantern, he went stooping his old back down the path, and across to Coney's and back again ; not believing anybody had searched properly, and finely kicking the snow about.

"It's a pity this here snow's on the ground, sir," cried Thomas. "A little thing like an earring might easily slip into it in falling."

"Not a bit of it," growled the Squire. "That tramp has got the earring."

"I don't believe it's the tramp," I stoutly said. "I don't think she was a tramp : and she seemed honest. I liked her face."

"There goes Johnny with his 'faces' again!" said the Squire in laughing mockery ; and Tod echoed it.

"It's a good thing you don't have to buy folks by their faces, Johnny : you'd get finely sold sometimes."

"And she had a true voice," I persisted, not choosing to be put down. "One you might trust without as much as looking at herself."

Well, the earring was not to be found; though the search continued more or less till bed-time, for every other minute somebody would be looking again on the carpets. "It is not so much for the value I regret it," spoke Mrs. Todhetley, the tears rising in her meek eyes; "as for the old associations connected with it. I never got the earrings out but they brought back to me the remembrance of my girlhood's home."

Early in the morning I ran down to the school-house. More snow had fallen in the night. The children were flocking in. Miss Timmens had not noticed the earrings at all, but several of the girls said they had. Strange to say, though, most of them could not say for certain whether they saw *both* the earrings: they thought they did; but there it ended. Just like old Coney!

"I am sure both of them were there," spoke up a nice, clean little girl, from a back form.

"What's that, Fanny Fairfax?" cried out Miss Timmens, in her quick way. "Stand up. How are you sure of it?"

"Please, governess, I saw them both," was the answer; and the child blushed like a peony as she stood up above the others and said it.

"Are you sure you did?"

"Yes, I'm sure, please, governess. I was looking which o' the two shined the most. 'Twas when the lady was stooping over the shirt, and the sun came in at the window."

"What did they look like?" asked Miss Timmens.

"They looked ——" and there the young speaker came to a stand-still.

"Come, Fanny Fairfax!" cried Miss Timmens sharply. "What d'you stop for? I ask you what the earrings looked like. You must be able to tell if you saw them."

"They were red, please, governess, and had shining things round them like the ice when it glitters."

"She's right, Master Johnny," nodded Miss Timmens to me: "and she's a very correct child in general. I think she must have seen both of them."

I ran home with the news. They were at breakfast still.

"What a set of muffs the children must be, not to have taken better notice!" cried Tod. "Why, when I saw only the one earring in, it struck my eye at once."

"And for that reason it is nearly sure that both of them were in at the school-house," I rejoined. "The children did not particularly observe the two, but they would have remarked it directly had only one been in. Old Coney said the same."

"Ay: it's that tramp that has got it," said the Squire. "While your mother was talking to her, it must have slipped out of the ear, and she managed to secure it. Those tramps lay their hands on anything; nothing comes amiss to them; they are as bad as gipsies. I daresay this was a gipsy—dark as she was! I'll be off to Worcester and see the police: we will soon have *her* found. You had better come with me, Johnny; you'll be able to describe her."

We went off without delay, caught a passing train, and were soon at Worcester and at the police station. The Squire asked for Sergeant Cripp: who came to him, and prepared to listen to his tale.

He began it in his impulsive way; saying out-right that the earring had been stolen by a gipsy-tramp. I tried to say that it might have been only lost, but the Pater scoffed at that, and told me to hold my tongue.

"And now, Cripp, what's to be done?" he demanded, not having given the sergeant an opportunity to put in a word edgeways. "We must get the earring back; it is of great value, and much prized, apart from that, by Mrs. Todhetley. The woman must be found, you know."

"Yes, she must be found," agreed the sergeant. "Can you give me a description of her?"

"Johnny—this young gentleman can," said the Squire, rubbing his brow with his yellow silk handkerchief, for he had put himself into a heat, in spite of the frosty atmosphere that surrounded us. "He was with Mrs. Todhetley when she talked to the woman."

"A thin woman of middle height, stooped a good deal, face pale and quiet, wrinkles on it, brown eyes," wrote the sergeant, taking down what I said. "Black poke bonnet, clean cap border, old red woollen shawl with the fringe torn off in places. Can't remember gown; except that it was dark and shabby."

"And, of course, sir, you've no clue to her name?" cried the sergeant, looking at me.

"Yes; she said it was Nutten—as I understood it; but Mrs. Todhetley thought she said Nutt." And I went on to relate the tale the woman told. Sergeant Cripp's lips extended themselves in a silent smile.

"'Twas well got up, that tale," said he when I finished. "Just the thing to win over a warm-hearted lady."

"But she could not have halted at the gate, expecting to steal the earring?"

"Of course not. She was prowling about to see what she could steal, perhaps watching her opportunity to get into the house. The earring fell in her way, a more valuable prize than she expected, and she made off with it."

"You'll be able to hunt her up if she's in Worcester, Cripp," put in the Pater. "Don't lose time."

"If she's in Worcester," returned Mr. Cripp, with emphasis. "She's about as likely to be in Worcester, Squire Todhetley, as I am to be at this present minute in Brummagem," he familiarly added. "After saying she was coming to Worcester, she'd strike off in the most opposite direction to it."

"Where on earth are we to look for her, then?" asked the Pater in commotion.

"Leave it to us, Squire. We'll try and track her. And—I hope—get back the earring."

"And about the advertisement for the newspapers, Cripp; we should put one in."

Sergeant Cripp twirled the pen in his fingers while he reflected. "I think, sir, we will let the advertisement alone for a day or two," he presently said. "Sometimes these advertisements do more harm than good: they put thieves on their guard."

"Do they? Well, I suppose they do."

"If the earring had been simply lost, then I should send an advertisement to the papers at once. But if it has been stolen by this tramp, and you appear to consider that point pretty conclusive —"

"Oh, quite conclusive," interrupted the Pater. "She has got that earring as sure as that this is an umbrella in Johnny Ludlow's hand. Had it been dropped anywhere on the ground, we must have found it."

"Then we won't advertise it. At least, not in to-morrow's papers," concluded Sergeant Cripp. And telling us to leave the matter entirely in his hands, he showed us out.

The Squire went up the street with his hands in his pockets, looking rather glum.

"I'm not sure that he's right about the advertisement, Johnny," he said at length. "I lay awake last night in bed, making up the wording of it in my own mind. Perhaps he knows best, though."

"I suppose he does, sir."

And he went on again, up one street and down another, deep in thought.

"Let's see—we have nothing to do here to-day, have we, Johnny?"

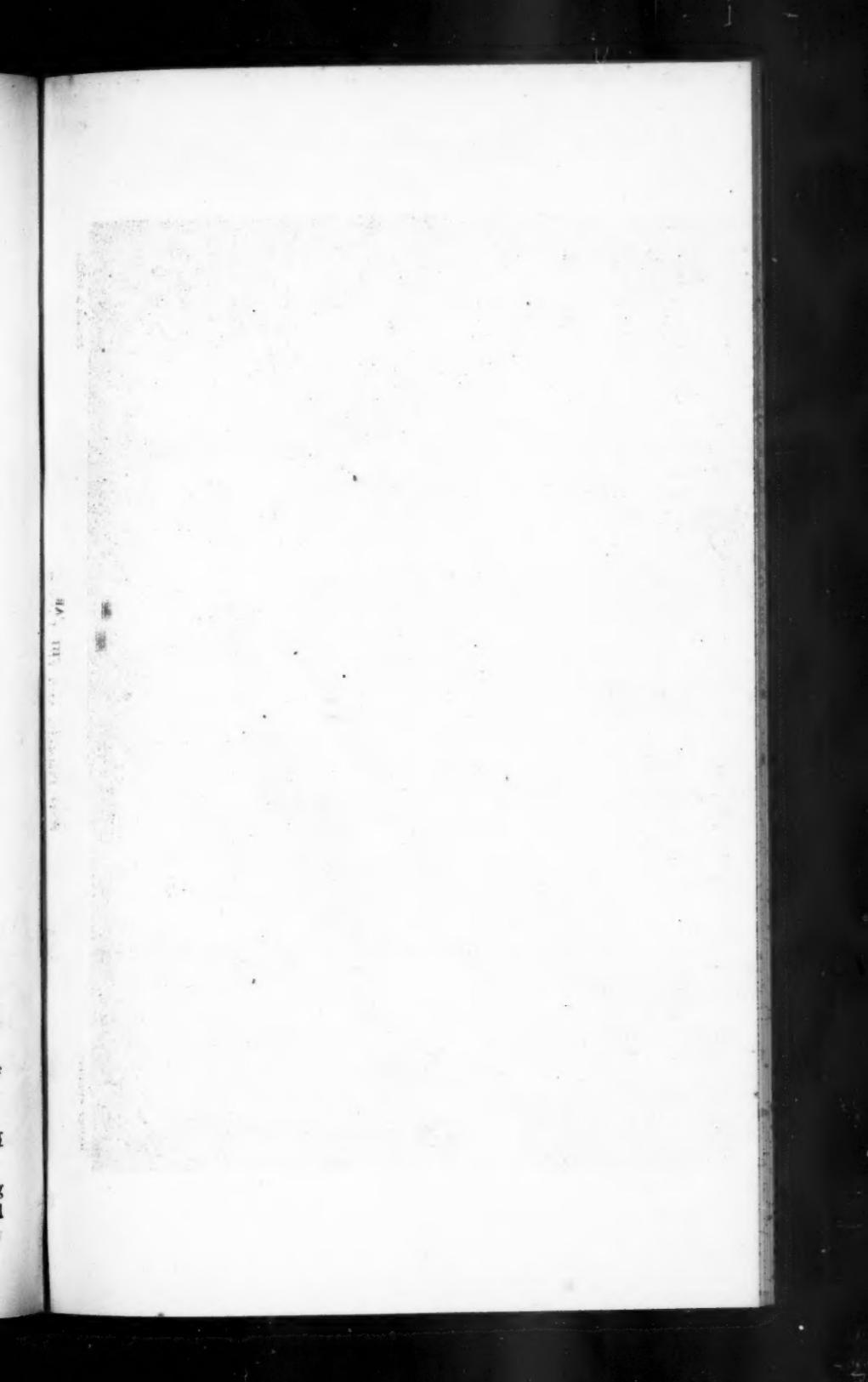
"Except to get the pills made up. The mother said we were to be sure and not forget them."

"Oh, ay. And that's all the way down in Sidbury! Couldn't we as well get them made up by a druggist nearer?"

"But it is the Sidbury druggist who holds the prescription."

"What a bother! Well lad, let us put our best foot foremost, for I want to catch the one o'clock train if I can."

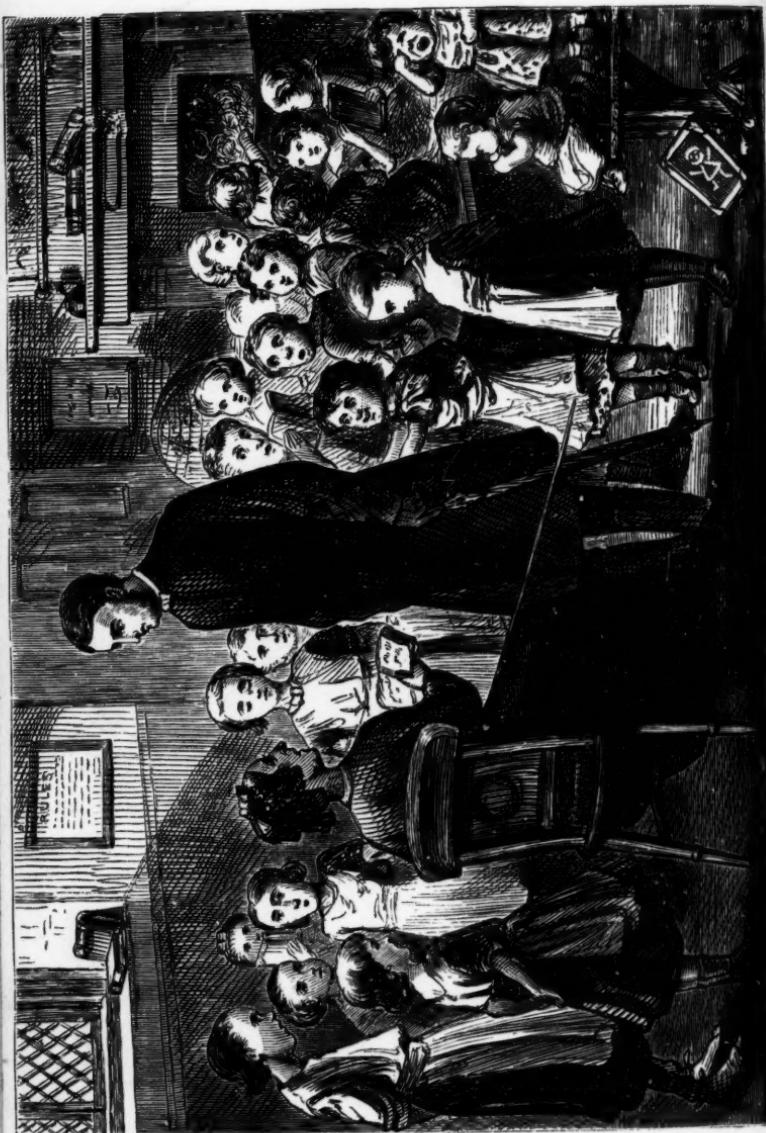
Barely had we reached Sidbury, when who should come swinging along the pavement but old Coney, in a rough, white great-coat and top-boots. Not being market-day, we were surprised to see him.



EDWARD REAUX.

MISS TIMMINS AND THE PARSON.

HARRY FURNISS.



"I had to come in about some oats," he explained. And then the Squire told him of our visit to the police, and the sergeant's opinion about the advertisement.

"Cripp's wrong," said Coney decisively. "Not advertise the earring!—why, it is the first step that ought to be taken."

"Well, so I thought," said the Pater.

"The thing's not obliged to have been stolen, Squire: it may have been dropped out of the ear in the road, and picked up by somebody. The offering of a reward might bring it back again."

"And I'll be shot if I don't do it," exclaimed the Pater. "I can see as far through a millstone as Cripp can."

Turning in to the Hare-and-Hounds, which was old Coney's inn, they sat down at a table, called for pen and ink and began to draw out an advertisement between them. "Lost. An earring of great value, pink topaz and diamonds," wrote the Squire on a leaf of his pocket-book; and when he had got as far as that he looked up.

"Johnny, you go over to Eaton's for a sheet or two of writing paper. We'll have it in all three of the newspapers. And look here, lad—you can run for the pills at the same time. Take care of the street slides. I nearly came down on one just now, you know."

When I got back with the paper and pills, the advertisement was finished. It concluded with an offer of £5 reward. Applications to be made to Mr. Sergeant Cripp, or to Squire Todhetley of Crabb Cot. And, leaving it at the offices of the "Herald," "Journal," and "Chronicle," we returned home. It would appear on the next day, Saturday; to the edification, no doubt, of Sergeant Cripp.

"Any news of the earring?" was the Squire's first question when we got in.

No, there was no news of it, Mrs. Todhetley answered. And she had sent Luke Macintosh over to the little hamlet, Islip; who reported when he came back that there was no Mrs. Nutt known there.

"Just what I expected," observed the Pater. "That woman was a thieving tramp, and she has got the earring."

Saturday passed over and Sunday came. There's nothing to tell of either day; except that when the Worcester paper arrived on Saturday morning the advertisement was in it as large as life, and the Pater read it out to us. Friday and Saturday had been very dull, with storms of snow; on Sunday the sun shone again, and the air was crisp.

It was about three o'clock, and we were sitting at the dessert table cracking filberts—for on Sundays we always dined early, after morning service—when Thomas came in and said somebody was outside, asking if he could speak to Mrs. Todhetley. But the Mater, putting a shawl over her head and cap, had just stepped over to sit a bit with sick Mrs. Coney.

"Who is it, Thomas?" asked the Squire. "A stranger! Tell him to send his name in."

"His name's Eccles, sir," said Thomas, coming back again. "He comes, he says, from Sergeant Cripp."

"My goodness!—it's about the earring," cried the Squire.

"That it is, sir," said old Thomas. "The first word he put to me was an inquiry whether you had heard news of it."

I followed the Pater into the study. Tod did not leave his filberts. Standing by the fire was a tall, well-dressed man, with a black moustache and blue silk necktie. I think the Squire was a little taken aback at the fashionable appearance of the visitor. He had expected to see an ordinary policeman in uniform.

"Have you brought tidings of Mrs. Todhetley's earring?" began the Pater, all in a flutter of eagerness.

"I beg a thousand pardons for intruding upon you on a Sunday," returned the stranger, cool and calm as a spring cucumber, "but the loss of an hour is sometimes most critical in these cases. I have the honour, I believe, of speaking to Squire Todhetley?"

The Squire nodded. "Am I mistaken in supposing that you come about the earring?" he reiterated. "I understood my servant to mention Sergeant Cripp. But—you don't, I presume, belong to the police force?"

"Only as a detective officer," was the answer, given with a smile. "A *private* officer," he added, putting a stress upon the word. "My name is Eccles."

"Take a seat, Mr. Eccles," said the Squire, sitting down himself, while I stood back by the window. "I do hope you have brought tidings of the earring."

"Yes—and no," replied Mr. Eccles, with another fascinating smile, as he unbuttoned his top coat. "We think we have traced it; but we cannot yet be sure."

"And where is it?—who has got it?" cried the Squire eagerly.

"It is a very delicate matter, and requires delicate handling," observed the detective after a slight pause. "For that reason, I have come over to-day myself. Cripp did not choose to entrust it to one of his men."

"I'm sure I am much obliged to him, and to you too," said the Squire, all his face beaming. "Where is the earring?"

"Before I answer that question, will you be so kind as to relate to me, in a few concise words, the precise circumstances under which the earring was lost?"

The Pater entered on the story, and I helped him. Mr. Eccles listened attentively.

"Exactly so," said he, when it was over. "Those are the facts Cripp gave me; but it was only second-hand, you see, and I preferred

to hear them direct from yourselves. They serve to confirm our suspicion."

"But where is the earring?" repeated the Pater.

"If it is where we believe it to be, it is in a gentleman's house at Worcester. At least, he may be called a gentleman. He is a professional man: a lawyer, in fact. But I may not name names in the present state of the affair."

"And how did the earring get into his house?" pursued the Squire, all aglow with interest.

"News reached us last evening," began Mr. Eccles, after searching in his pockets for something that he apparently could not find—"reached us in a very singular way, too—that this gentleman had been making a small purchase of jewelry in the course of yesterday; had been making it in private, and did not wish it talked of. A travelling pedlar—that was the description we received—had come in contact with him and offered him an article for sale, which he, after some haggling, purchased. By dint of questioning, we discovered this article to be an earring: one earring, not a pair. Naturally Mr. Cripp's suspicion was at once aroused; he thought it might be the very self-same earring that you have lost. We consulted together, and the result is, I decided to come over and see you."

"I'd lay all I've got it is the earring!" exclaimed the Squire, in excitement. "The travelling pedlar that sold it must have been that woman tramp."

"Well, no," returned the detective quietly. "It was a man. Her husband, perhaps, or some friend of hers."

"No doubt of that! And how can we get back the earring?"

"We shall get it, sir; never fear, if it be the earring you have lost. But, as I have just observed, it is a matter that will require extreme delicacy and caution in the handling. First of all, we must assure ourselves beyond doubt that the earring *is* the one in question. To take any steps upon an uncertainty would not do: this gentleman might turn round upon us unpleasantly."

"Well, let him!" cried the Squire.

The visitor smiled his candid smile again, and shook his head. "For instance, if, after taking means to obtain possession of the earring, we found it to be coral set with pearls, or opal set with emeralds, instead of a pink topaz with diamonds, we should not only look foolish ourselves, but draw down upon us the wrath of the present possessor."

"Is he a respectable man?" asked the Pater. "I know most of the lawyers —"

"He stands high enough in the estimation of the town, but I have known him do some very dirty actions in his profession," interrupted Mr. Eccles, speaking rapidly. "With a man like him to deal with, we must necessarily be wary."

"Then, what are you going to do?"

"The first step, Squire Todhetley, is to make ourselves sure that the earring is the one we are in quest of. With this view, I am here to request Mrs. Todhetley to allow me to see the fellow earring. Cripp has organized a plan by which he believes we can get to see the one I have been telling you of: but it will be of no use our seeing it unless we can identify it."

"Of course not. By all means. Johnny, go over and ask your mother to come in," added the Squire eagerly. "I'm sure I don't know where she keeps her things, and might look in her places for ever without finding it.—Meanwhile, Mr. Eccles, can I offer you some refreshment? We have just dined off a beautiful sirloin of beef: it's partly cold now, but perhaps you won't mind that."

Mr. Eccles said he would take a little, for he had come off by the first train after morning service, and so lost his dinner. Taking my hat, I dashed open the dining-room door in passing. Tod was at the nuts still, Hugh and Lena on either side him.

"I say, Tod, do you want to see a real live detective? There's one in the study."

Who should be seated in the Coneys' drawing-room, her bonnet and shawl on, and her veil nearly hiding her sad face, but Lucy Bird—Lucy Ashton that used to be. It always gave me a turn when I saw her: bringing up all kinds of ugly sorrows and troubles. I shook hands, and asked after Captain Bird.

She believed he was very well, she said, but she had been spending the last day or two at Timberdale Court with Robert and Jane. Today she had been dining with the Coneys—who were always kind to her, she added with a rising sigh—and was now about to go off to the station to take the train for Worcester.

The Mater was in Mrs. Coney's bedroom with old Coney and Cole the doctor, who was paying his daily visit. One might have thought they were settling all the cases of rheumatism in the parish by the time they took. While I waited, I told Mrs. Bird about the earring and the present visit of Detective Eccles. Mrs. Todhetley came down in the midst of it; and lifted her hands at the prospect of facing a detective.

"Dear me! Is he anything dreadful to look at, Johnny? Very rough?—Has he got handcuffs?"

It made me laugh. "He is a regular good-looking fellow—a gentleman. Tall and slender and well dressed: gold studs and a blue neck tie. He has a ring on his finger and wears a black moustache."

Mrs. Bird suddenly lifted her head, and stared at me: perhaps the description surprised her. The Mater seemed inclined to question my words: but she said nothing, and came away, after bidding goodbye to Lucy.

"Keep up your heart, my dear," she whispered. "Things may get brighter sometime."

When I got back, Mr. Eccles had nearly finished the sirloin, some cheese, and a large tankard of ale. The Squire sat by, hospitably pressing him to take more, whenever his knife and fork gave signs of flagging. Tod stood looking on, his back against the mantelpiece. Mrs. Todhetley soon appeared with a little cardboard box, where the solitary earring was lying on a bed of cotton.

Rising from the table, the detective carried the box to the window, and stood there examining the earring; first in the box, then out of it. He turned it about in his hand, and looked at it on all sides: it took him a good three minutes.

"Madam," said he, breaking the silence, "will you entrust this earring to us for a day or two? It will be under Sergeant Cripp's charge, and perfectly safe."

"Of course, of course," interposed the Squire, before anybody could speak. "You are welcome to take it."

"You see, it is possible—indeed, most probable—that only one of us may be able to obtain sight of the other earring. Should it be Cripp, my having seen this one, will be useless to him. It is essential that he should see it also: and it will not do to waste time."

"Pray take charge of it, sir," said Mrs. Todhetley, mentally recalling what I had said of his errand to her and Lucy Bird. "I know it will be safe in your hands and Sergeant Cripp's. I am only too glad that there is a probability of the other one being found."

"And look here," added the Squire to Eccles, while the latter carefully wrapped the box in paper, and put it into his inner breast-pocket, "don't you and Cripp let that confounded gipsy thief escape. Have her up and punish her."

"Trust us for that," was the detective's answer, given with an emphatic nod. "*She is already as good as taken.* There's not a doubt—I avow it to you,—that the other earring is yours. We only wait to verify it."

And, with that, he buttoned his coat, and bowed himself out, the Squire himself attending him to the door.

"He is as much like a detective as I'm like a Dutchman," commented Tod. "At least, according to what have been all my previous notions of one. Live and learn."

"He seems quite a polished man, has quite the manners of society," added the Mater. "I do hope he will get back my poor earring."

"Mother, is Lucy Bird is more trouble than usual?" I asked.

"She is no doubt in deep distress of some kind, Johnny. But she is never out of it. I wish Robert Ashton could induce her to quit that most worthless husband of hers!"

The Squire, after watching off the visitor, came in, rubbing his hands

and looking as delighted as old Punch. He assumed that the earring was as good as restored, and was immensely taken with Mr. Eccles.

"A most intelligent, superior man!" cried he. "I suppose he is what is called a gentleman-detective: he told me he had been to College. I'm sure it seems quite a condescension in him to work with Cripp and the rest."

And the whole of tea-time and all the way to church, the praises were being rung of Mr. Eccles. I'm not sure but that he was more to us that night than the sermon.

"I confess I am mortified about that woman, though," confessed Mrs. Todhetley. "He said, you heard, that she was as good as taken: they must have traced the earring to her. I did think she was one to be trusted. How one may be deceived in people!"

"I'd have trusted her with a twenty-pound note, mother."

"Hark at Johnny!" cried Tod. "It's a lesson for you, lad."

Monday morning. The Squire and Tod had gone over to South Crabb. Mrs. Todhetley sat at the window, adding up some bills, her nose red with the cold; and I was boxing Hugh's ears, for he was in one of his frightfully troublesome moods, when Molly came stealing in at the door, as if she had been committing murder.

"Ma'am! missis!—there's that tramp in the yard!"

"What?" cried the Mater, turning round.

"I vow it's her: I know the old red shawl again," pursued Molly, as important as though she had caught half the thieves in Christendom. "She turned into the yard as bold as brass; so I just slipped the bolt o' the door again' her, and come away. You'll have her took up, ma'am?"

"But if she has come back, I don't think she can be guilty," cried Mrs. Todhetley, perfectly bewildered. "We had better see what she wants. What do you say, Johnny?"

"Why, of course we had. I'll go to her, as Molly's afraid."

Rushing out of hearing of Molly's vindictive answer, I went round through the snow to the yard, and found the woman meekly tapping at the kitchen door—the old red shawl, and the black bonnet, and the white muslin cap border, all the same as before. Before I got quite up, the kitchen door was cautiously drawn open, and Mrs. Todhetley looked out. The poor old woman dropped a curtsey and held out half a crown on the palm of her withered hand.

"I've made bold to call at the door to leave it, lady. And I can never thank ye enough, ma'am," she added, the tears rising to her eyes; "my tongue would but fail if I tried at it. 'Tis not many as would ha' trusted a stranger, and that a poor body like me. I got over to Worcester quick and comfortable, ma'am, thanks to you, and found my daughter better nor I had hoped for."

The same feeling of reliance, of trust, arose within me as I saw her face and heard her voice and words. If this woman was what they had been fancying her, I'd never eat tarts again.

"Come in," said Mrs. Todhetley; and Molly, looking daggers as she heard it, approached her mistress with a whisper.

"Don't, ma'am. It's all a laid-out plan. She has heard she's suspected, and brings back the half-crown, thinking to put us off the scent."

"Step this way," went on Mrs. Todhetley, giving no heed to Molly, except a nod—and she took the woman into the little store-room where she kept her jam-pots and things, and told her to go to the fire.

"What did you tell me your name was," she asked, "when you were here on Friday?"

"Nutt'n, ma'am."

"Nutt'en," repeated the Mater, glancing at me. "But I sent over to Islip, and nobody there knew anything about you—they denied that anybody of your name lived there."

"Why, how could they do that?" returned the woman, with every appearance of surprise. "They must have mistook somehow. I live in the little cottage, ma'am, by the dung-heaps. I've lived there for five-and-twenty year, and brought up my children there, and never had parish-pay."

"And gone always by the name of Nutten?"

"Not never by no other, ma'am. Why should I?"

Was she to be believed? There was the half-crown in Mrs. Todhetley's hand, and there was the honest old wrinkled face looking up at us openly. But, on the other side, there was the assertion of the Islip people; and there was the earring.

"What was the matter with your daughter, and in what part of Worcester does she live?" queried the Mater.

"She's servant to a family in Melcheapen Street, ma'am; minds the children and does the beds, and answers the door, and that. When I got there—and sick enough my heart felt all the way, thinking what the matter could be—I found that she had fell from the parlour window that she'd got outside to clean, and broke her arm and scarred her face, and frightened and shook herself finely. But thankful enough I was that 'twas no worse. Her father, ma'am, died of an accident, and I can never abear to hear tell of one."

"I—I lost an earring out of my ear that afternoon," said Mrs. Todhetley, plunging into the matter, but not without hesitation. "I think I must have lost it just about the time I was talking to you. Did you pick it up?"

"No, ma'am, I didn't. I should have gave it to you if I had."

"You did not carry it off with you, I suppose!" interrupted wrathful

Molly ; who had come in to get some eggs, under pretence that the batter-pudding was waiting for them.

And whether it was Molly's sharp and significant tone, or our silence and looks, I don't know ; but the woman saw it all then, and what she was suspected of.

"Oh, ma'am, were you thinking that ill of me ?"—and the hands shook as they were raised, and the white border seemed to lift itself from the horror-stricken face. "Did you think I could do so ill a turn, and after all the kindness showed me ? The good Lord above knows I'm not a thief. Dear heart ! I never set eyes, lady, on the thing you've lost."

"No, I am *sure* you didn't," I cried ; "I said so all along. It might have dropped anywhere in the road."

"I never see it, nor touched it, sir," she reiterated, the tears raining down her cheeks. "Oh, ma'am, do believe me !"

Molly tossed her head as she went out with the eggs in her apron ; but I'd have sooner believed myself guilty than that poor woman. Mrs. Todhetley thought with me. She offered her some warm ale and a crust, but the old woman shook her head in refusal, and went off in a fit of sobs.

She knows no more of the earring than I know of it, mother."

"I feel *sure* she does not, Johnny."

"That Molly's getting unbearable. I wonder you don't send her away."

"She has her good points, dear," sighed Mrs. Todhetley. "Only think of her cooking ! and of what a thrifty, careful manager she is !"

The Squire and Tod got home for lunch. Nothing could come up to their ridicule when they heard what had occurred. The Mater and I were two muffs, fit to go about the world in a caravan as specimens of credulity. Like Molly, they thought we ought to have secured the woman.

"But you see she was honest in the matter of the half-crown," debated Mrs. Todhetley in her mild way. "She brought that back. It does not stand to reason that she would have dared to come within miles of the place, if she had taken the earring."

"Why, it's just the thing she would do," roared the Squire, pacing about in a commotion. "Once she had got rid of the earring, she'd show herself here to throw suspicion off her. And she couldn't come without returning the half-crown : it must have gone nicely against the grain to return *that*." And Mrs. Todhetley, the most easily swayed spirit in the world, began to veer round again like a weathercock, and fear we had been foolish.

"You should see her jagged-out old red shawl !" cried Molly triumphantly. "All the red a'most washed out of it, and the edges in

tatters. I know a tramp when I see one : and the worst of all tramps is them that do the tricks with clean hands and snow-white cap-borders."

The theme lasted us all the afternoon. I held my tongue, for it was of no use contending against the stream. It was getting dusk when Cole called in, on his way from the Coneys. The Squire put the grievance before him, demanding whether he had ever heard of two people so simple as I and the Mater.

"What did she say her name was?" asked Cole. "Nutt'en?—of Islip? Are you sure she did not say Norton?"

"She said Nutt'n. We interpreted it into Nutten."

"Yes, Johnny, that's how she would say it. I'll lay a guinea it's old Mother Norton."

"Who's she?" cried the Squire. "Respectable?"

"Respectable, honest, upright as the day," replied Cole. "I have a great respect for old Mrs. Norton. She's very poor now, but she was not always so."

"She told us this morning that she lived in the cottage by the dung-heaps," I put in.

"Exactly; she does so. And a nice savoury dung-heaps it is; the disgrace of Islip," added Cole.

"And you mean to say, Cole, that you know this woman—that she's not a tramp?" spoke the Pater. "Come!"

"I know Mrs. Norton of Islip," he answered. "I saw her pass my window this morning: she seemed to be coming from the railway station. She is no tramp, Squire."

"How was she dressed?" asked Mrs. Todhetley.

"Dressed? Well, her shawl was red, and her bonnet black. I've never seen her dressed otherwise, when abroad, these ten years past."

"And—has she a daughter in service at Worcester?"

"Yes, I think so.—Yes, I am sure so. It's Susan. Oh it's the same: you need not doubt it."

"Then what the deuce did Luke Macintosh mean by bringing word back from Islip that she was not known there?" fiercely demanded the Squire of me.

"But Luke said he asked for her by the name of Nutt—Mrs. Nutt. I questioned him about it this afternoon, sir, and he said he understood Nutt to have been the name we gave him."

This was very unsatisfactory as far as the earring went. (And we ascertained later that poor Mrs. Norton *was* Mrs. Norton, and had been suspected wrongly.) For, failing the tramp view of the case, who could have sold the earring to the professional gentleman in Worcester?

"Cripp knows what he is about; never fear," observed the Squire.

"Now that he has got the case well in hand, he is sure to pull it successfully through."

"Yes, you may trust Cripp," said the doctor. "And I hope, Mrs. Todhetley, you will soon be gladdened by the sight of your earring again." And Cole went out, telling us we were going to have a thaw. Which we could have told him, for it had already set in and the snow was melting rapidly.

"To think that I should have done so stupid a thing! But I have been so flustered this morning by that parson and his nonsense that I hardly know what I'm about."

The speaker was Miss Timmens. She had come up in a passion, after twelve o'clock school. Not with us, or with her errand—which was to bring one of the new shirts to show, made after Tod's fancy—but with the young parson. Upon arriving and unfolding the said shirt, Miss Timmens found that she had brought the wrong shirt—one of those previously finished. The thaw had gone on so briskly in the night that this morning the roads were all mud and slop, and Miss Timmens had walked up in her pattens.

"He is enough to make a saint swear, with his absurdities and his rubbish," went on Miss Timmens, turning from the table where lay the unfolded shirt, and speaking of the parson; between whom and herself waged hot war. "You'd never believe, ma'am, what he did this morning"—facing Mrs. Todhetley. "I had got the spelling-class up, and the rest of the girls were at their slates and copies, and that, when in he walked amid the roomfull. 'Miss Timmens,' says he to me in the hearing of 'em all, 'I think these children should learn a little music. Perhaps a little drawing might not come amiss to those who have talent for it.' 'Oh yes, of course,' says I, hardly able to keep my temper, 'and a little dancing as well, and let 'em go out on the green daily and step their quadrilles to a fife and tambourine!' 'There's nothing like education,' he goes on, staring hard at me, as if he hardly knew whether to take my words for jest or earnest; 'and it is well to unite, as far as we can, the ornamental with the useful, it makes life pleasanter. It is quite right to teach girls to hem dusters and darn stockings, but I think some fancywork should be added to it; embroidery and the like.' 'Oh you great gaby!' I thought to myself, and did but just stop my tongue from saying it. 'Will embroidery and music and drawing help these girls to scour floors, and cook dinners, and wash petticoats?' I asked. 'If I had a set of young ladies here, it would be right for them to learn accomplishments: but these girls are to be servants. And all I can say, sir, is, that if ever those new-fangled notions are introduced, you'll have to find another mistress, for I'll not stop to help in it. It would just lead many a girl to her ruin, sir; that's what it would do, whoever lives to see it.' Well, he went

away with that, ma'am ; but he had put my temper up—talking such dangerous nonsense before the girls, their ears all agape to listen ! —and when twelve o'clock struck I was not half through the spelling-class ! Altogether, it's no wonder I brought away the wrong shirt."

Miss Timmens, her errand a failure, began folding up the shirt in a bustle, her thin face quite fiery with anger. Mrs. Todhetley shook her head : she did not approve of nonsensical notions for these poor peasant girls any more than did the rest of us.

"I'll bring up the right shirt this evening when school's over ; and if it suits we'll get on with the rest," concluded Miss Timmens, making her exit with the parcel.

"What the world will come to later, Mr. Johnny, if these wild ideas get much ground, puzzles me to think of," resumed Miss Timmens, as I went with her, talking, along the garden path. "We shall have no servants, sir ; none. It does not stand to reason that a girl will work for her bread at menial offices when she has had fine notions instilled into her. Grammar, and geography, and history, and botany, and music, and singing, and fancy work !—what on earth good will they be of to her in making beds and cleaning saucepans ? The upshot will be that they won't make beds and they won't clean saucepans ; they'll be above it. The Lord protect 'em !—for I don't see what else will ; or what will become of them. Or of the world, either, when it can get no servants. My goodness, Master Johnny ! what's that ? Surely it's the lost earring ?"

Close to the roots of a small fir-tree it lay : the earring that had caused so much vexation and hunting. I picked it up : its pink topaz and its diamonds shone brightly as ever in the sun, and were quite uninjured. Mrs. Todhetley remembered then, though it had slipped her memory before, that in coming in-doors after our interview with the woman at the gate, she had stopped to shake this fir-tree, bowed down almost to breaking with its weight of snow. The earring must have fallen from her ear then into the snow, and been hidden by it.

Without giving himself time for a mouthful of lunch, the Squire tore away to the station through the mud, as fast as his legs would carry him, and thence to Worcester by train. What an unfortunate mistake it would be should that professional gentleman have been accused, who had bought something from the travelling pedlar !

"Well, Cripp, here's a fine discovery !" panted the Squire, as he went bursting into the police-station and to the presence of Sergeant Cripp. "The lost earring has turned up."

"I'm sure I'm very glad to hear it," said the sergeant, facing round from a letter he was writing. "How has it been found ?" And the Squire told him how.

"It was not stolen at all, then !"

"Not at all, Cripp. And the poor creature we suspected of taking it proves to be a very respectable old body indeed, nothing of the tramp about her. You—you have not gone any lengths yet with that professional gentleman, I hope!" added the Squire, dropping his voice to a confidential tone.

Cripp paused for a minute as if not understanding. "We have not employed any professional man at all in the matter," said he; "have not thought of doing so."

"I don't mean that, Cripp. You know. The gentleman you suspected of having bought the earring."

Cripp stared. "I have not suspected anyone."

"Goodness me, you need not be so cautious, Cripp," returned the Squire, somewhat nettled. "Eccles made a confidant of me. He told me all about it—except the name."

"What Eccles? I really do not know what you are talking of, sir."

"What Eccles, why your Eccles. Him you sent over to me on Sunday afternoon: a well-dressed, gentlemanly-man with a black moustache. Detective Eccles."

"I do not know any Detective Eccles."

"Dear me, my good man, you must be losing your memory! He came straight to me from you on Sunday; you sent him off in haste without his dinner."

"Quite a mistake, sir," said the sergeant. "It was not I who sent him."

"Why, bless my heart and mind, Cripp, you'll be for telling me next the sun never shone! Where's your recollection gone?"

"I hope my recollection is where it always has been, Squire. We must be at cross purposes. I do not know any one of the name of Eccles, and I have sent nobody at all to you. As a proof that I could not have done it, I may tell you, sir, that I was summoned to Gloucester on business on Friday last directly after I saw you, and did not get back here until this morning."

The Squire rubbed his face, while he revolved probabilities, and thought Cripp must be dreaming.

"He came direct from you; from yourself, Cripp; and he disclosed to me your reasons for hoping you had found the earring, and your doubts of the honesty of the man who had bought it—the lawyer, you remember. And he brought back the other earring to you that you might compare them."

"Eh—what?" cried Cripp, briskly. "Brought away the other earring, do you say, sir?"

"To be sure he did: what else did you send him for?"

"And he has not returned it to you?"

"Returned it! of course not. You hold it, don't you?"

"Then, Squire Todhetley, you have been cleverly robbed of this

"second earring," cried Cripp quietly. " *Dodged* out of it, sir. The man who went over to you must have been a member of the swell-mob. Well-dressed, and a black moustache!"

" He was a college man ; he had been at Oxford," debated the unfortunate Pater, sitting on a chair, in awful doubt.

" You did not see him there, sir," said the sergeant, with a suppressed laugh. " I might tell you I had a duke for a grandmother ; but it would be none the nearer fact."

" Mercy upon us all ! " groaned the Squire. " What a mortification it will be if that other earring's gone ! Don't you think somebody in your station here may have sent him, if you were out yourself ? "

" I will inquire for your satisfaction, Squire Todhetley," said the sergeant, opening the door ; " but I can answer for it before hand that it will be useless."

It was as Cripp thought. Eccles was not known at the station, and nobody had been sent to us.

" It all comes of that advertisement you put in, Squire," finished up Cripp, by way of consolation. " The swell-mob would not have known there was a valuable jewel missing but for that, or the address of those who had missed it."

The Pater came home more crestfallen than a whipped schoolboy, after leaving stringent orders with Cripp and his men to track out the swindler. It was a blow to all of us.

" I said he looked as much like a detective as I'm like a Dutchman," quoth Tod.

" Well, it's frightfully mortifying," said the Squire.

" And the way he polished off that beef, and drank down the ale ! I wonder he did not contrive to walk off with the silver tankard ! "

" Be quiet, Joe ! You are laughing, sir ! Do you think it is a laughing matter ? "

" Well, I don't know," said bold Tod. " It was cleverly done."

Up rose the Pater in a passion. Vowing vengeance against the swindlers, especially those wicked ones who went about, got up in good clothes and a moustache ; and heartily promising the absent and unconscious Cripp to be down upon him if he did not speedily run the varmint to earth.

And that's how Mrs. Todhetley lost the other earring.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

FRA ANGELICO.

From the German of ELISE POLKO.

WHOEVER has beheld with his own eyes those heavenly forms created by the brush of Santi Tosini, otherwise called "Fra Giovanni," "Fra Angelico," and, later in life, surnamed "Il Beato;" whoever has gazed upon the mist of glory which hangs like a golden veil over all his sacred pictures; cannot fail to feel the conviction that the Divinity of Art never more decidedly announces itself than when the master's brush is devoted to the service of God. We read, however, in old books on the Art of Painting, and in the lives of the great masters, that these very old masters were often brought to enter upon this service by most singular means. Even Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, who painted a "Coronation of the Blessed Virgin," an "Ascension of Christ," the "Birth of Saint John," and many other bright pictures from the lives of the saints, chose quite different subjects in his early youth, before he had passed through the purifying fires of sorrow.

Giovanno Tosini was, in his seventeenth year, as high-spirited and merry a youth as ever trod life's pathway. The beautiful green earth, with its spring-time and its charming daughters, was a thousand-fold dearer to him than the sky, on which he scarcely ever bestowed a thought, except because of the lovely light of the sun and moon.

About the year 1404 he settled with his elder brother at Florence, after the death of their parents at Mucello. Giovanno Tosini was so wondrously beautiful in both face and form, that even strangers who met him in the street would stand still, astonished at so much grace, vigour, and loveliness. Chestnut locks hung over his shoulders, and the expression of his dark eye won him the heart of the very coyest maiden. His creations charmed all, both old and young; and as at that time he found particular pleasure in painting female forms, it was no wonder that he was so pressed to complete all his commissions. During all ages, women seem to have found an infinite charm in having the impress of their faces put upon wood or canvas, and the handsomer the painter the greater run he has. But Giovanno Tosini was very dainty in his choice, and although possessed of but moderate means, he would allow many a handful of gold to escape him, because it would give him no satisfaction to paint the face to which the hand belonged.

He had a strange eye for female loveliness, though, and many people thought he did not know how to appreciate beauty. Some of the most celebrated beauties of Florence he declared not worth painting; blooming cheeks and brilliant eyes had no power to attract him; on the other hand averted or downcast eyes, cheeks pale with secret sorrow, a brow traced with the light furrows of care and trouble, lips around which were drawn the lines of pain of a mournful heart, attracted

him mightily, and he loved to paint such women's heads. She, therefore, might consider herself fortunate who had the honour to be painted by this strange painter ; and let him demand as high a price as he pleased, it would gladly be paid for a picture of Giovanno Tosini's.

But in spite of this life amongst so many charming women, no one had as yet succeeded in captivating the youth for more than a single day, and the gentlest complaints of his fickleness flew from one sweet mouth to another. The finest snares did not escape his notice, the most powerful chains he playfully unbound, the loveliest flowers wearied him if they had bloomed but a short time upon his restless heart. But the ladies loved "Angelico," as they were wont to call him in secret, all the more because of this very inconstancy, for each one privately believed that her charms must finally succeed in catching and retaining this brilliant butterfly.

But Giovanno's heart had its love : a strong unquenchable love, which met with as ardent a return. He clung with true passion to his brother and teacher, his senior by ten years ; whilst Giulio on his part had no greater treasure upon earth than his Giovanno. In his eyes there was no youth in the wide world more beautiful, perfect, and pure than his younger brother, and Giovanno had no secret from him. They lived together in a small house in the vicinity of the city, surrounded by a shady garden, with a verandah covered with vines, which afforded a fine prospect of the city and the turbulent Arno.

Here, of an evening, the brothers sat arm in arm often until late in the night, talking of the past, of their lost parents, brothers and sisters, of their merry childhood, and of the future, when Giulio should be a celebrated painter, for which time he waited hopefully year in and year out. "Then we will go to Rome," Giovanno would always say at such times, with sparkling eyes, and Giulio would smilingly nod his head in acquiescence. In reality, however, there was very little prospect of Giulio making for himself a great name ; he was a good painter, but nothing more ; besides, he would often journey about for weeks at a time, and do very little work. He was possessed by an insatiable spirit for rambling, which gave him no rest or peace, but before he had time to grow warm under one roof, impelled him onwards.

This longing to roam through the world is a dangerous gift of Providence, for only a few favoured ones are possessed with the necessary wings. The greater number sit, bound hand and foot, like poor prisoners, with the burning impulse to be up and away, and their hearts are ready to burst as they watch the flight of the swallow or the lark.

This was not the case with Giulio Tosini. Even during the life-time of his parents, he might roam as often and as long as he pleased, and no one would offer a word of resistance.

Giovanno was always glad, however, when the broad, tall form of his brother appeared in the doorway, and he might entwine his arms

around the neck of the home-returned wanderer. As long as Gialio was in the house, Giovanno never stirred from his side, and would, without a sigh, renounce the society of his most charming lady friends for his brother's sake. For there was so much to ask about and to tell, and Giulio always had his head full of such beautiful pictures, all of which he was going to paint in the right time; which time, strangely enough, never came. When he spoke so enthusiastically of the splendid landscapes he had seen and the brilliant colours out there in the distance, which he meant to reproduce upon canvas some day, Giovanno would grow sad, and one day he said: "I wish that I too could paint mountain, valley, and sky; it seems to me that must be far more satisfactory than to represent the poor human face, the original of which must soon perish, whilst the mountains out there, the valleys, the sky and the sun shall remain as they are, year in and year out, for ever! You will be a great painter, Giulio, but I shall never be anything but a bungler—it is that makes me restless and sad."

But Giulio laughingly replied, "Why, my boy, there is more in you than in ten fellows of my stamp; when you are as old as I, your name will stand far above mine!"

It was upon Giovanno's eighteenth birthday that Giulio, after an unusually long absence, returned home. With a cry of tenderness he drew his younger brother to his heart, then led him to the studio, and casting his bundle upon the ground, and himself upon a wooden stool, said, "I have something very important to tell you, my boy! Tomorrow we part again, but, please the saints, only for a short time, and then I will bring you back something beautiful and lovely—a dear little sister. Do not look at me with such unbelieving eyes; what I tell you is true. Not very far from Bologna I treated myself to a wife!"

Giovanno was greatly astounded at this piece of news, and he grew sorrowful at this unexpected change. A jealous discontent took possession of his heart. "You will not love me now as you used to," he said. But Giulio soon laughingly talked away this feeling, and swore to him, in the name of all the saints, that he should always occupy the first place in his heart, even were his bride a thousand times more beautiful than she was.

"She is beautiful, then?" Giovanno asked, eagerly.

"Too beautiful for me, at all events," was the reply.

"Why did you not bring her with you at once?"

"Because she wishes to stay with her mother, who is very ill, until she either recovers or goes to heaven."

"Where did you first meet her?"

"In Bologna, at the house of her uncle, a rich goldsmith. It was the mother, by the way, who first cast an eye upon me, but then she fell sick and gave me her daughter. I love little Giuditta very much, but she is, in fact, too young for me—she is scarcely sixteen."

"Why did you come away from her?"

"Because I had a longing to see you, and besides, I wanted to ask you to put the house a little to rights—fit to receive a mistress. You understand such matters far better than I, and the little new sister herself shall thank you for it."

Giovanno promised to attend to everything according to the best of his ability, and the brothers passed the night together in pleasant discourse. The next day Giulio took leave again; Giovanno wished the invalid a speedy recovery or peaceful end, and the elder brother started off cheerfully to wander back again from whence he had come. As he gave the last good-bye kiss, he laughingly drew a little gold circle from his finger, saying—"My wife put this little ring on my finger on our wedding-day—it is too small for me, and hurts me. Take you the ring and keep it safely until I return."

Giovanno laughingly placed the ring upon his ring-finger, and it fitted him as though it had been made for his wear. Then they parted gaily.

And now the young man set to work in good earnest to prepare the upper floor for the reception of a bride, and in the midst of all the purchases and arrangements, it seemed to him as though he were building the little nest for himself and not for another. He did his best to make the sitting-room of the expected sister as neat as possible; close beside it he arranged the common studio, and strangely enough he placed his easel so that he could always have the work-chair of his brother's young wife before his eyes. The sleeping apartment, too, he made very comfortable, and he worked unweariedly in the garden, that it also might present a cheerful, pleasant aspect to the new comer. He stayed in the house nearly all day, except at mealtime, when he would lounge over to the Osteria to dine, or to fetch the simple fruits and cakes which constituted his morning and evening meals.

There was very little work done now. The portrait of a smiling young Florentine stood upon his easel, it is true, and needed but a few touches for its completion, but these few touches were never done. Giovanno himself could not understand this, for heretofore he had never been at all inclined to idleness. Now he would sit for hours at a time on his stool, his head leaning against the easel, one hand holding the palette in his lap, the other carelessly holding the brush, his painting-stick between his knees, gazing into the adjoining apartment, where at the open window stood the artistically carved sewing-chair. There he often saw, so distinctly it seemed as though he could lay hold of it, a lovely female form, in light garments, who seemed to look over and nod smilingly at him. The wondrously delicate little head seemed to start forth from a background of verdure which surrounded the window, and the rich, dark locks glittered on the innocent brow like the golden halo about the head of a saint. All this was so distinct that he would some-

times spring up, seize a board, and think to reproduce the lovely figure ; but then it would vanish like mist from before his eyes. The thought of this ideal head made it distasteful to him to paint other female heads, and henceforth it was with a great revulsion of feeling that he undertook portraits. The character of his paintings changed, and that of the painter with them.

The handsome Giovanno Tosini grew absent and grave in the presence of the most charming ladies ; and the ladies themselves did not think they were half so beautiful when he painted them as heretofore. It seemed as though a dull, sad tone now mingled with the otherwise so brilliant colours, a light shadow overspread the heretofore so bright creations of his brush. This change did not escape his own observation, and it greatly grieved him. He scarcely noticed that, since his brother's visit, autumn and winter had long since passed away, and now spring was beginning to make way for summer. He was contented in his solitude, and grew more and more so as the sweet image came to stay longer and longer with him ; and finally he was able, in particularly inspired moments, to retain on canvas at least certain outlines. This was the commencement of the fulfilment of the dearest wish of Giovanno's heart.

With a repugnance which alarmed him, he thought of the possible return of his cheerful brother, who would tear him from his precious solitude, and who, should he confess to him, would only laugh at his odd fancies ; and he felt ready to hate the new sister, who would usurp the place at the window of the pure phantom of his brain. A feeling of ineffable tenderness for this beloved ideal form finally pervaded his whole being. The love for his brother, which but a few months before had satisfied every longing, now sank like a poor drop in the endless sea of intoxicating bliss.

In this way a whole year from the time of Giulio's departure flew rapidly by, during which time the solitary Giovanno had only once had tidings from him. A strolling painter brought him greetings from his brother, and the news that the mother of his young wife was dead, but that Giuditta herself was too sick and weak to undertake the homeward journey as yet.

One fine autumn day, Giovanno sat in his studio, beginning for the hundredth time to paint the head of the darling image of his dreams ; he had already sketched the charming outlines of the pure profile, and the heavy locks were beginning to appear around the brow. All at once a strange, oppressive restlessness took possession of him ; it seemed as though a voice were whispering in his ear, "They are coming home to-day !"

He quickly pushed everything from before him, and hastened down into the garden to gather flowers to adorn the sitting-room and studio. The handsomest bouquet he placed before the new sister's chair, and

fastened another one to Giulio's easel. The more his heart trembled at the return of his brother, and the destruction of his dream life, the greater outward signs of joy he wished to make, so that Giulio should never notice that he wished him away. The new sister, too, should never know the misery of his foolish heart; this was why he was so unwearied in his efforts to adorn the dwelling with wreaths and flowers.

When he returned from the garden for the last time, the sun had already set, but the glow of the purple twilight still lighted the room, and the evening breeze sportively drove the long grape-vine tendrils into the open window. Giovanno entered the sitting-room, his hand full of leaves and flowers, his heavy locks hanging in confusion over his dark cheeks, his great eyes glittering with feverish expectation; but as he looked towards the window he uttered a cry, grew deathly pale, took a step back—and leaves and flowers fell from his hands at the feet of a young woman, who advanced to meet him.

Giovanno's heart almost ceased to beat—a miracle had been accomplished—for living and breathing, and all wreathed in smiles, stood the long adored ideal form before him! There was the sweet young form, rich yet slender, in light, simple garments; there were the heavy brown locks, the innocent brow, the noble nose, the lovely mouth, with the soft lines of suffering about the lips, the dark, child-like eyes, with the long lashes!

Who can tell what Giovanno would have done in his tumultuous joy, had not Giulio come upon him by storm and taken him lovingly in his arms? Then he told his young wife to shake hands with Giovanno. She blushingly obeyed, and like two strange children who are to play together for the first time, they shyly pressed one another's hands. And now Giulio cried out in his cheery voice—

"You must forgive us, Giovanno, for having taken you so by surprise, but I had no means of sending you word that we were coming. Have you thought to prepare a bed for our little one? For see what a splendid boy we have brought with us!" Upon which he took from the arms of a stout, good-natured looking maid a struggling, lustily screaming boy, and proudly showed it to his brother. "This is our son," said he. "Yesterday he was three months old."

"I have heard nothing about that!" stammered the astounded Giovanno.

"Oh, don't be uneasy," replied Giulio, gaily, "he can sleep with his mother! And now go into the kitchen, Rosetta; leave the boy with me, and make ready a nice meal, for we are both hungry and thirsty."

Giovanno grew red and white at once; his breath forsook him. "Go into the kitchen," Giulio had said—and he had never once thought of a kitchen! Had not he and Giulio always been ac-

customed to take their meals at the neighbouring Osteria? A kitchen! Who could have thought of such a thing? There were flowers enough, and to spare, but—nothing to eat! Now he remembered that on the lower floor there was a dark corner, but then there had never been a fire lighted on its hearth. At last, in bitter anxiety, he had to confess the want of the kitchen, and he heartily despised himself for his carelessness. So the maid ran over to the hostess of the Osteria, and, in spite of the forgotten kitchen, no one died of hunger that evening in the humble dwelling of the Tosinis. And the babe slept more sweetly that night on the bosom of its young mother than in the softest cradle in the world.

At the end of a week the arrangements of the little household were perfectly completed to the satisfaction of every one, and now it would seem reasonable to suppose that a happy time had come to Giovanno. The heart of man, however, is a perverse and contradictory thing. Now that the beloved form of his dreams was invested with real life, that it breathed, smiled, walked, and talked, Giovanno wished a thousand times for the silent, shadowy phantom in the place of the sweet girl-woman—for that had belonged to him alone; but not a breath of this was his; he loved the sacred property of his brother! Day and night he tormented himself over the fearful miracle which had been wrought upon him, over the strange manner in which his young heart had been given to a vision, which had at last appeared to his bodily eyes as the wife of Giulio. Sometimes it seemed to him as though he must disclose his secret to his brother, for it weighed heavily upon his heart; but when he opened his lips to speak, he could utter no sound.

Giulio, too, was changed; he had grown grave and taciturn, and Giovanno never saw him look tenderly at his young wife or caress her. He did not seem as strong as he used to be either, and his brow and cheeks were uncommonly pale; yet he jestingly put aside his brother's anxious questioning. He often went very quietly about the studio, but it was noisy enough in the sitting-room to make up for that, for there sat a young mother playing with her child, and it was really no wonder that Giovanno worked less than ever.

Giuditta was scarcely seventeen, and was an innocent combination of child, maiden, and mother; she was like a pure orange-blossom. Towards her husband she was submissive and gentle; towards Giovanno shy, and only with her child was she entirely herself. It was impossible to see this fresh young beauty with her beautiful child without laying heart and soul at her feet—at least, so Giovanno thought. Sometimes when he watched her by stealth, with a mingling of bliss and pain, it would chance that Giuditta's dark eye and his would meet; then she would colour up the deepest crimson, whilst he would grow pale, bow down his head lower behind his easel, and not dare to look up for a

long, long time. Giulio's gaze often wandered over to the adjoining room, but, as Giovanno distinctly observed, only because of the child, which was the joy of the father's heart. When he fondled the little one on his knee, his countenance brightened up like the merry face of former times, and when he handed it back to his wife, it would have been hard to tell whose eyes shone more proudly, those of the father or the mother.

The handsome boy was the only unmixed joy in the lives of these three, and each one would bury for a time whatever sorrow or care might oppress his heart in the blue sea of those innocent, laughing baby eyes.

So time stole away like a sultry summer day, and these three people gradually showed more and more plainly that their hearts were oppressed by a heavy weight of woe, and that their souls sighed. What grieved Giovanno the most was that he could find no consolation in his art, no refuge against that feeling which, with ever increasing power and might, possessed his whole nature and being. He seemed to himself a wretched bungler; never had he worked less, never had work been so hard to him as now. The weariness of death would come upon him if he sat long at his easel, painting an indifferent face, whilst Giuditta's sweet voice rang in his ear—infinite sadness, ineffable pity for the girl-mother, deep sorrow for the brother, for whose jewel his hands were outstretched, and ardent longing for a release. Day and night, without cessation, he was tormented with the most contradictory thoughts and desires. Sometimes it seemed as though he must snatch his beloved in his arms, and flee away with her to the remotest part of the earth; then, again it would seem as though he must hide in some dark corner, so as never to see her face more. Sometimes he longed to make a pilgrimage to Rome, in hopes of becoming a great painter there; yet he stayed at home and did nothing; but his cheeks lost their freshness and his step grew heavy.

But how was Giuditta herself affected meanwhile? How could her young heart withstand the visible love of the beautiful youth? Besides, she had only given her innocent being to her husband on her mother's earnest prayer, and, without love, the child had become wife and mother. But she never thought of this until she saw Giovanno. From that first evening, though, she had loved him and lived in his looks. She was still a calm, peaceful child; the breath of glowing passion had not yet blown around her head, and this quiet life with and near the man she loved sufficed her. She saw him every day from morning till evening; their eyes met sometimes; she might look up at him and smile; she heard his voice; he was always near; he loved her child—more she never dreamed of, and she prayed that her life might ever flow on as now, until a far off, blissful end.

It happened one day—Giuditta was putting her child to sleep—that

the brothers sat lounging idly in the studio. Giulio had opened the window; evening had laid its soft, rosy hand over the valley and the sparkling stream. Harvest-waggons, drawn by yoked oxen adorned with flowers, were passing by in the street; powerful looking men walked beside the animals, bearing a long pole, on the top of which hung a wreath; proud maidens, carrying fine bundles of sheaves, hung on the arms of merry lads, flowers in their black locks, flowers on their breasts. Burning glances were cast backwards and forwards, words of love flew from young lips, and were banteringly responded to, and amidst all, charming love songs, full at the same time of ardour and mischief.

Suddenly, amidst all this life and love, this pleasure and desire, this bustle and turmoil, there arose the sound of the sacristan's bell; pious monks were passing with the Host. They had been rendering the farewell to earth easy to a departing soul, and now were returning to their cloister, which lay not far distant, shaded by plane trees and glowing in the evening sun.

How silent everything grew at once; a foreboding of sweet repose filled the bosoms of all, and silently the two brothers at the window stretched out their hands to one another. At that moment the golden ring which Giulio had once half in jest placed upon Giovanno's finger fell to the ground with a ringing sound, and rolled to Giulio's feet. Then Giovanno wildly cast himself into Giulio's arms, threw his arms about his neck, crying—"The saints have sent me this token; now I have found the path in which I must walk; well for me and for you—and well for her too! Now we shall all regain our lost peace. See, your ring, which I have wantonly worn until now; there it lies at your feet! And now, at this sacred moment, you shall know all, and you must forgive me and bless me as you would if I were dying, for I am going to leave you, Giulio, for ever!"

Calmly and quietly, with his head on his brother's bosom, as in those happy times when every secret was confessed to this beloved friend, he told Giulio all his strange story. He withheld no thought or feeling from the first apparition of the dream image until the present moment. Giulio did not interrupt him with a single word, scarcely even by a half-suppressed sigh. Finally, Giovanno concluded with the words, "My confession is at an end. Forgive me if you can; and now, farewell. I am going to follow those holy fathers who dwell in yonder grey walls; I shall unite myself to the Order of the Dominicans and retire to their convent. There, in that calm retreat every struggle has an end."

Then Giulio gently raised his darling's head from his bosom, and looked long into the dear features of his younger brother until the tears started in his eyes. Then he showered a thousand kisses upon the fair young brow and beautiful lips, and said, "No, my jewel, you shall

never walk the path that leads to the convent with my consent ! Your pathway lies towards Rome, not into a gloomy cell; this perfect form was not meant to be enshrouded in the garments of a monk. Live and be happy; look and learn; and forget Giuditta, forget her—not because she is my wife—but because she is the mother of my child. Had it not been for my child, Giovanno, I should have gone away long ago—have wandered off to the remotest part of the earth ; in time you would have thought me dead, and I should have left you as my only bequest the woman you love, and whose ring you have worn so long. You were dearer than all else in the world to me, Giovanno, until my child was born. Now I cannot part from him, and a mother should never forsake her child ! Should the saints ever deprive me of my boy, Giuditta may follow you ; it was not through love that she became my wife, and in *that* case I should retain no power over her. I have long known your love ; see this scrap, with the outlines of her young face, I found the day after my return home ! I knew it was your hand which had traced these features. And now, Giovanno, go to Rome, there is no need of a single day's delay ! ”

The next day, by the first grey dawn of morning, Giovanno had tied his bundle, and was hanging on his brother's neck, bidding him farewell with a heavy heart. His so suddenly awakened longing for a convent life had vanished in the earnest conversation of the past night, in which the two brothers had kept their vigils together, and now Rome stood on the horizon of his heart and wishes, like a burning sun whose beams would frighten away the shadows of his grief, and he was in haste to be off that he might work, learn, and create ! Yet it cost him a hard struggle to steal off thus like a thief in the night, without greeting and farewell ; for he dared not trust himself to see Giuditta ; she was to receive his parting adieux from her husband. Giovanno left with him his good-bye for the woman he loved ; and Giulio saw the last struggle of the young heart, the last tears, as his brother crossed the sill of the house where lived and breathed his all.

“ In three months I will follow you to Rome and bring you tidings of *her* and of us all,” added Giulio, as he finally freed him from his embrace.

After a pilgrimage of a few days, Giovanno grew deathly weary and sick, and some merciful monks of the Order of St. Dominic, who found him lying in the road with pale cheeks and torn, bleeding feet, gently raised him and bore him to their cool, pleasant cloister. There he long lay on his couch, either unconscious or else tormented by strange dreams. The pious brothers loved him because of his patient, tender nature, wondered over his angelic countenance, and really thronged around to wait upon him. But in spite of their care and attention, Giovanno Tosini grew weaker from day to day, and often-

times, as the monks stood watching him with hearts full of compassion, they thought the smile upon his lips was that of one whose soul had departed.

One day, in the early morning hours, directly after the first mass, they had all collected around Giovanno's bed, for he had passed a wretched night, and they sorrowfully believed that his last hour had come. As they softly whispered the dying prayers for this young departing soul, a sunbeam made its way through an opening of the curtain and hovered like a halo around the sick youth's head. It was indeed a solemn scene within the little cell of Giovanno Tosini.

Suddenly Giovanno opened his great eyes, cast a smiling, grateful gaze on those around him, and asked for painting materials. As they all thought this strange request was the last wish of a departing soul, they brought a little painting board and paints, and he sat up, arranged everything around him, and commenced to paint. All crowded about him, and some kneeled, expecting a miracle to be performed. The tender hand laid the first colours, and all eyes followed the movements of the brush. The canvas grew brighter and brighter, and displayed to mortal view a true glimpse of heaven and the golden hue of that light in which the spirits of the blessed dwell, and from this heavenly golden hue there gradually emerged a winged, upward-soaring angel.

By evening the picture was completed, and the pious brothers sank on their knees before it, for it seemed as though they beheld a real angel, with an expression at the same time of deep earnestness and bliss; and this angel looked so exactly as though it were soaring aloft that when the picture was carried to the abbot he ordered the window to be drawn down, lest the heavenly messenger should leave them too soon for its heavenly dwelling. The features of this angel were precisely those of Giovanno Tosini, and beneath the painting were written the words, "He who has loved much, to him shall much be forgiven. I have found peace."

When the work was completed, the sick youth laid aside his brush, stretched himself upon his couch, slept softly and sweetly the whole night, and awakened in the morning convalescent. He called for food and drink, and his words were distinct, his manner calm. From this hour he began to improve; in a short time he was able to creep around the garden leaning on the arm of one or other of the brothers; and at last he was as well as ever, though the bloom never returned to his cheeks. Then he had a long talk with the abbot of the monastery, and a few days afterwards Giovanno Tosini, the Florentine, who had not yet numbered twenty years, joined the Order of the Dominicans, and became a monk in those cloister walls which had so mercifully received him when he lay by the roadside sick and weary in body and soul.

They gave him that name which the ladies of Florence had once

given him ; Angelico he was called, and the day of the investiture of the young *Fra Angelico* was one of rejoicing for the monks, for they all hung with great tenderness upon their young foundling.

On this day, too, there went a messenger from the monastery to Florence with the picture of the angel that Giovanno had painted upon his sick bed. Those two who received it as their last earthly greeting, silently pressed one another's hands. Then Giulio, who was lost in wonder over the radiance of the painting, exclaimed, "Now I comprehend why all that has come to pass was permitted—the angels have called him ; they need a painter who can announce their glory upon earth. Now Giovanno's star will arise—thank God that he has permitted me to behold my darling's glory !"

But Giuditta stole away to her chamber, knelt beside the couch of her child, and wept bitterly. *Her star had set for this life.*

Since he had painted that angel for his brother and Giuditta, in token that his soul had conquered earthly love and chosen the better part, *Fra Angelico* felt for the first time wherefore St. Luke had placed the brush in his hand, and awaked his eye for colour. Henceforth he only painted the images of saints and angels, the illuminations for missals ; and no painted angels, not even those of the divine Raphael look so exactly as though they were flying ; none are more incorporeal, more transparent, and more radiant than those of *Fra Angelico da Fiesole*.

The more Giovanno painted, the freer and lighter grew his heart, the more radiant his pictures. Heavy chains seemed to fall from him, restlessness and sorrow were wiped away, and the moonlight of peace shone in his eyes. Strict in the execution of the rules of the order, gentle and full of inexhaustible pity towards the poor and sick, he led the life of a saint, and the people of the country round and the monks themselves called him "*Il Beato.*"

The renown of his glorious paintings was spread about through all lands, and with it the renown of his piety and gentleness. After he had executed great fresco paintings in the most masterly manner, Cosmo di Medici sent for him to adorn the monastery of San Marco and the Church of the Annunciation. In the monastery of San Marco he decorated every cell with a wondrously beautiful fresco painting, and the church itself with a painting of the Madonna of the Annunciation, which called forth the astonishment of all beholders. When he had completed this glorious work, Pope Nicolas V. sent for him to Rome with orders to decorate the Chapel of St. Laurentius in the Vatican, with the pure and beautiful creations of his brush.

So *Fra Angelico* went to Rome, and there temptation once more assailed his young heart, and longing for a world full of love and joy cried aloud within him. It was in this wise.

One day after he had left the Vatican and was slowly moving towards

the steps of the papal palace, he saw kneeling upon the lowest step a closely-veiled female form, which as he approached entreatingly held out its hands towards him. But as he was about delivering the accustomed blessing, a strange horror rooted him to the spot, and the words died away on his lips. Then the woman raised her head ; the veil which concealed her face fell back, disclosing Giuditta's pure, innocent features. Then he started—the flush of blissful joy overspread his face—a beam of the highest ecstasy of love broke from his eyes, and the lips softly and tremblingly breathed, “Giuditta !”

She smiled at him with an expression which said plainly—“I am with you—that is heaven for me !”

“Where is Giulio ?—where is your child ?” he inquired all at once, in a tone of deep anxiety.

She replied, in an almost inaudible voice—“With the angels, and therefore am I come to you. Your brother could not endure the loss of the boy, when the saints took him from us, and so he followed him to heaven. I have wept and prayed at their graves ; but I have never despaired, for I knew that now I might come to you ; that I should find you, even were you concealed in the remotest part of the earth. Now, speak ! what shall become of me ?”

He turned away from her as pale as death, and after a pause he said, “Seek admission into a convent of Sisters of Mercy, and when in your prayers you think of your dead, think also of me. Farewell ! in the regions of the blest we shall meet again in joy ; remember that, ‘Giuditta !’”

With these words he left her. A half suppressed cry of pain resounded after him ; but he did not once slacken his speed ; he closed his ears to this touching call. But that same day, whilst the multitude in the Chapel of St. Laurentius marvelled without ceasing at the wondrously radiant scenes from the lives of the saints, and glorified Fra Angelico da Fiesole, who was able to create such divine paintings, the artist himself lay like a second St. Laurentius, upon burning coals of unspeakable torment, and wearied himself with prayers and tears of blood to bring his reawakened heart once more to repose.

And the saints were with him. Fra Angelico gained the mastery over his heart. Giuditta had vanished, and he made no attempt to seek her. When he had completed the decorations of the chapel, the Pope was so charmed with the work, and with the artist himself, that he offered him the dignity of an archbishopric in Florence, in token of his esteem. But with proud humility Fra Angelico declined this favour, and journeyed back to his cloister on foot. He conscientiously maintained the rules of his order, that without the special consent of his superiors he should never fulfil a commission for another cloister or for private individuals, and also that the price he asked for any of his works should be submitted to their judgment.

The greatest and most glorious of his pictures on canvas he painted in the peaceful quiet of his beloved cloister—the Coronation of the Virgin, in the midst of the most beautiful saints and angels, and the Miracle of St. Dominic. The head of the Madonna was a memorial of the only woman he had loved upon earth. His last work, in the stillness of the cloister, before he journeyed to Rome the second time, was a side-group in his great picture, the Ascension of Christ. This group he called the “Reunion of the Blessed.” He worked upon this with a heavenly smile. Here he once more invoked the beloved form of Giuditta; she had arisen in the most glowing tints, and in this painting he dared to embrace her—to kiss her. Giulio was there, too, and his boy, and kneeling by his side, Fra Angelico himself, in monk’s garments, gently and shyly holding in his arms a wondrously beautiful winged female form—his glorified Giuditta; and round about them shining forms, rapturous embraces, heavenly meetings, sweet blendings, blissful reunions of lovers, of man and wife, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters. The whole was a hymn in colours on the immortality of the soul and reunion of spirits after the death of the body.

When this glorious creation of his pious soul was complete, he went, accompanied by the tears of the brothers, once more to Rome, to paint the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament in the Vatican. And here, when this work was done, without any previous sickness, he closed his eyes in his last sleep. They found him dead in the chapel, his palette and painting-stick still in his hands, and with an expression of the highest rapture on his face. When, surrounded by a sobbing multitude—they laid him upon a bier, the features of the grey-haired man of sixty-seven years were transformed to those of a wondrously beautiful youth. The people never wearied of this miracle, but poured in day and night to behold Fra Angelico, and the touch of his garment consoled all those who bore in their hearts the sorrow of a secret, despairing love. The Pope canonized the departed with the title, Il Beato, and the body was buried with great pomp in the Minerva Church, at Rome.

At the same hour there was buried in the Convent of the Sisters of the Heart of Jesus, a poor nun, known by the name of Sister Giovanna. And now this departed spirit celebrated with the glorified master up there in the skies a “Reunion of the Blessed” far more divine and jubilant even than Fra Angelico had painted it.

A MIDNIGHT MEETING.

BY MARY CECIL HAY.

I ALWAYS did think my brother Solomon a little hard upon me, though I confess that there was reason for it. Mine were not exactly his ways, you see ; for mine were more the ways of pleasantness and his the paths of peace.

But could I help it that I was not born a parson, like Solomon ? *Everybody* isn't born a parson. Indeed, I don't find that, as a rule, it runs much in families ; and even if it did, you couldn't expect that two such parsons as Solomon could be born and reared in the bosom of one homestead.

A long while ago, when we were boys together in tight blue jackets, with gilt buttons and deep frilled collars, I used to try with all my might and main to imitate Solomon, and when we were exhibited in society I always echoed verbatim every remark I heard him make, so that I might share his fame. But that was, as I said, long ago, and gradually such close following in Solomon's steps grew tedious, so I chose a wider way. I was warned a great deal against this wider way, but somehow I lounged easily into it when I found how difficult it was to be always as good as Solomon.

As I said, to begin with, I always did think Solomon a little hard upon me. If I used language any stronger than a Quaker's, he would maintain a marked and impressive silence himself ; if I took anything stronger than lemonade, he would ask meaningly for water, to my discomfiture ; and if—after we had grown up, and were living each of us alone in his own house—I took part in the harmless recreations of the age, I would for the next few days live in mortal terror of Solomon's appearance at the gate, with his book of sermons under his arm, and the odour of outraged sanctity pervading him. His figure, coming through the gate, even without that brown book under his arm, would have been impressive enough, but it never did appear so. He was curious in appearance, was Solomon, being emphatically long in every way. His legs and feet were long ; his arms and hands were long ; his hair was long ; his nose was long, and his sermons were long. His coat-tails were uncommonly long too ; and indeed I think the only things about him which were not long were his sleeves.

After any particularly jovial evening at the Squire's or at Jo Fleming's at Blagly (the Squire bred the best fighting cocks in the county except Jo's, and Jo's whisky was the primest that ever escaped duty), you may guess that my heart didn't bound with joy at the sight of Solomon's long figure and long face : still on ordinary occasions Solomon and I were good friends, and I looked forward to the day when he should

convert me to his own ways, and we should read the book of sermons aloud by turns through our old age. But then I knew there was plenty of time for that.

Well, we had marked the fight of the season, and I had backed Jo's bird heavily. The little affair was to come off on the Sunday afternoon, and for all the week before we were so excited (Jo and I and our chums, and the Squire and his chums) that we spent every evening together, discussing our birds and our bets ; not to mention the despatching of a good deal of the Squire's home-brewed, and of my old port, and of Jo's Scotch. You see we didn't read so much in those days as you do now, and so spent more time over these lighter duties. We didn't talk very much either, one of Solomon's sermons divided among us would have lasted us all for a week ; but we smoked—well, prettily steadily.

The Sunday came at last, and in the morning I sat in my corner of Solomon's pew, paying the greatest attention to him ; for I wouldn't for the world he should suspect where I was going in the afternoon, or that I had the slightest interest in either Jo's bird or the Squire's. What was my horror then when Solomon, in the very middle of his discourse (I always knew it was the middle when he began to say "lastly"), alluded darkly to a "besetting sin of the age," as a sport at which only Satan could laugh. "And he," concluded Solomon, and I felt his eye upon me, "chuckles with glee to see men so degrade themselves." I broke out into a damp heat. Could anyone have turned traitor and told Solomon? I kept my eyes down upon the carpet, and tried to make a resolution that this should be my last cock-fight ; but somehow the resolution jumbled itself up with speculations as to how the Squire would feel to-night when he was beaten, and how I should feel when I pocketed my £100 winnings.

"I shall certainly buy that colt of Jo's ; and now I think of it, I may as well get Solomon a new umbrella. I daresay he didn't mean anything about cock-fighting after all. He always had whims for attacking our sports, and of course that innocent diversion must take its turn, like bowls and billiards."

I had forgiven Solomon by the time he had doffed his long gown and joined me in the churchyard, and I only said, amiably, "You were rather hard upon us all to-day as usual, Sol."

"Was I?" he questioned, in his slow way. "Hard or soft, it does but little good, Jacob."

I turned the conversation gingerly. I could not easily prove his words to be untrue, and it wouldn't be polite if I did—so I didn't.

"Good-bye, Sol," I said with great relief, when we reached the parsonage gate.

"Shall I see you at service this evening?" was Solomon's most unfortunate inquiry, as he slowly removed his umbrella to his left hand, preparatory to giving me his right.

"I hope so, but I cannot say I am *quite* sure." I answered in that way for the purpose of breaking it to him as gently as I could. I knew Solomon felt this sort of thing as sharply as I felt a razor scratch in shaving, so I put it that way, that I *hoped* so, but could not say that I was quite sure.

"I'm sorry you are not sure, Jacob," said he; "I should have liked to see you at church to-night. I don't feel very well to-day, so will you come in now and stay the afternoon with me?"

"I wish I could, Sol," said I as jauntily as possible, "but the fact is I've promised an old friend at Luckheaton" (Luckheaton lay in the direction exactly opposite to Blagly) "to go over and have a quiet chat with him. He is not able to go about much himself."

I suppose Solomon was shaking hands in his ordinary manner, but his long fingers seemed to me to have tied themselves about mine to hold me back.

"You want a new umbrella, Sol," remarked I, neatly preparing the way for the gift I had in store for him; and, as I thought, turning the conversation with consummate tact.

"Do I?" asked Solomon, looking down upon the machine as if he had never seen it before in his life. "We both of us want a good many new things, Jacob; new habits, new aims, new—"

"Ah! yes, indeed we do," sighed I, cheerfully, as I felt the grip of his fingers relaxing. "You're looking all right, I'm glad to see. Don't go and fancy yourself ailing, Sol, it's a womanish trick, and not at all like you."

"No, I am not fanciful," he said, tucking his book tenderly under his long arm. "Good-bye, then, Jacob; I shall see you again sometime to-night, shall I?"

Awkward, that query at the end, but I nodded *yes* to him just as if I had known—Let me see—where was I? Well, Solomon and I parted very good friends. He looked back at me with a smile as I waited; and afterwards I looked back at him—with a smile too, for at the moment I turned, a branch of his old pear-tree caught his hat (which he always wore at the very back of his head) and kept it; and he walked on to the parsonage door without an idea that his head was bare. I hurried on cheerfully then, feeling pretty sure I was safe. Solomon would be in his study all the afternoon, and in his pulpit most of the evening. Then he would drink his cup of strong tea, and sleep the sleep of a parson till morning, with his lattice window wide open, and a square of the night-sky exactly before his eyes.

"My sleep is calm," he used to say, "if my last look has been on heaven."

And calm I believe it always was, though his bed was narrow and short, and he—though narrow too—was long. Sol never could be induced to spend on himself any money which he could spare to give away,

and so he persisted in using still the bed he had had as a boy. As for mine, I had been glad enough to discard it for a better.

Well, we had rare sport on that Sunday afternoon, and our bird came off the winner, though the Squire's was as plucky a little cock as ever got beaten. There he lay when the tussle was over, with his comb up and his mouth a little open, as if he was only taking in breath for a fresh attack ; yet as dead as if he were roasted with stuffing.

Jo gave us a supper after the fight ; then we despatched a bottle of port apiece over settling our bets ; then we gave our minds to pleasure, and enjoyed a good brew of Jo's punch ; and the Squire, though he had been beaten, was one of the cheerfulness of us all.

As it was Sunday, we determined to separate in good time ; so when it got towards eleven, we set out, while Jo stood in his lighted doorway shouting hearty good-nights after us. I had waited to make an appointment with him for the next day, that we might conclude the bargain for the colt, so I was a little behind the others in starting.

"Take care of yourself," called Jo, "you have the most money and the furthest to go. Mind the notes. Five twenties, and I've copied the numbers that we may be safe. Tell the Squire so, if he waylays you in the dark."

This was Jo's parting joke, and when I answered it I gave a kindly touch to the pocket-book in my breast-pocket ; and the Squire, who heard us, called out that he daren't try to-night as there was a moon behind the clouds.

I was riding a favourite little mare who knew every step of the way between my own stables and Jo's, so I just rode peaceably on in the dark, recalling the flavour of Jo's whisky, and singing over one of the verses of a song the Squire had given us :

"With five pounds your standing wages,
You shall daintily be fed ;
Bacon, beans, salt beef, cabb-ages,
Buttermilk, and barley-bread."

Suddenly the mare made a deliberate stop, and roused me from my melodious dreaminess. Certainly at the end of this lane a gate opened on the heath, but then she understood quite well that she had only to lift and push this gate, and she had never before roused me here when I had been riding sleepily home from Blagly.

"Steady, my girl ! Why, what is it ?" cried I, for she was shying back in the lane, and behaving in every way like a lunatic. I gave her such a cut as she had not felt since she was broken in ; and then, without a word of warning, she reared entirely upright ; took me at a disadvantage, and sent me sprawling into the ditch ; then turned and galloped back towards Blagly without me.

I was none the worse for my fall, only shaken a little, and astonished a great deal ; so I picked up first myself and then my hat, and stumbled

on to find the heath gate. I had my hand upon it, when the moon came smiling along from under a cloud, and the whole level waste of heath was made visible in a moment. But the sight of the heath, in all its barren ugliness, was not what struck me with such a chill, and made my eyes prick and my throat grow apoplectic. I never gave a second glance in *that* direction, for there, close to me, only on the opposite side of the closed gate, stood my brother Solomon. I could not have mistaken *him* if there had been only the very faintest flicker of light. There he was, in his long coat and his high hat, with his arms folded on the top bar of the gate, the brown book under one of them as usual, and his eyes fixed steadily on me.

"Solomon," I said, growing very cold and uncomfortable under his gaze, "it's getting chilly for you to be out."

He did not answer that, and so presently I went cheerfully on; "I've been—you remember where I said I was going—" I stopped again here. I did not want to confess where I had been if he did not know, and I did not want to tell another falsehood if he *did* know. So I put it to him that way, intending to be guided by his answer. It was so long in coming that I took heart of grace to try another tack. "Where have you been, Sol?"

Another pause and then he answered, just in his old slow way:

"I've been at home expecting *you*, Jacob; waiting for you until I could wait no longer."

"I'm sorry for that," I said, feeling a little cheerier to hear him speak. "I would not have been so late only I had to go round by Blagly on business. I daresay you notice that I'm coming from there now. I only went on business, Sol."

He made another pause before he answered, and though it was a trick of Solomon's, and always had been, I felt myself growing uncomfortably cold. Why could he not have stayed at home, as parsons should on Sunday nights?

But the icy chill turned all at once to a clammy heat when Solomon asked me quietly, and without turning his steady gaze from my face; "How much of that filthy lucre have you won, Jacob?"

"Wh—what?" I stammered—and then you might have knocked me down with the very smallest of the feathers in Jo's winning bird—"Wh—what, Solomon?"

He repeated the question, slowly and steadily.

"How much of that filthy lucre have you won, Jacob?"

"You—you have been dreaming, Solomon."

Unlinking his long fingers, which had been clasped together on the gate, he stretched one hand towards me. "Five notes," he said, still with the unmoved gaze. "Five worthless, ill-won notes."

I clasped my breast-pocket anxiously. "I have a little money here, Sol," I said, as airily as I could, "a few pounds more or less; and I

want to buy you a new umbrella, yours is getting shabby. I'll go into town to-morrow and choose one."

I tried to get up a little cheerfulness over it, but Solomon's gaze damped it all out of me; and, besides, he had not taken back his long, hungry, outstretched hand.

"Five notes," he said, again; "five worthless, ill-won notes, Jacob!"

"Even if I had the notes, Sol," I began, trembling like a leaf in a storm, "even if I had them—ha, ha! what an absurd idea!—what should *you* want with them? And—and," I added, clutching desperately at a straw of courage, "what right have you to them?"

"There is no right in the question," said Solomon, and his face grew longer and longer. "It is all wrong."

"You don't often joke, Sol," said I, pretty bravely, though I was trembling like any number of aspens, "but, of course, you're joking now, and it's rather late for a joke, isn't it? Come along home with me."

"I am not going your way now," he answered.

"Shall you be home to-night?" I asked, trying to finish up the scene in my natural tones.

"To-night? It is midnight now."

"God bless my soul, is it really?" I exclaimed, not so much surprised as ridiculously flurried and nervous under my brother's intent gaze.

Solomon had shivered as the words passed my lips, and for the first time he looked away.

"Good-night," he said, in his slow, absent way; and then I think he added three other words, which he often did add to his good-byes; but he spoke so low that I scarcely heard, and I felt so angry with him, too, that I didn't even try to hear.

I walked on moodily across the heath. All the benign effects of Jo's punch had evaporated; all the pleasure of the sport had been swept away in one chill blast; the only definite idea that possessed me was the determination *not* to buy my brother Solomon a new umbrella.

I always carried my own key, and forbade the servants to sit up for me, so you may guess I was surprised to find my groom watching for me at the gate.

"Walking, sir?" he exclaimed, meeting me with a hurried step and worried face. "I hoped you'd ride home that you might be the quicker at the parsonage. They've sent for you twenty times at least, sir. Mr. Solomon ——"

"I know," I interrupted; "Mr. Solomon is missing. I've just met him. I'll go on and tell them so, for I'll be bound the parish is all up in arms."

All the parish *was* up in arms, and had all gathered at the parsonage, as it seemed to me; but—strangest of all!—Solomon was there too; lying on his narrow bed opposite the open window, with the square of moonlit sky before his closed eyes.

They tell me something about a swoon or some such womanish trick ; and it may be true and it may not. At any rate, I remember nothing after the first few sentences they uttered. Solomon had been ailing for some time—so the words went—and had felt worse than usual that day, and lonely and restless. Still he had insisted on preaching in the evening, and afterwards had toiled up to my house to see if I was at home, and then toiled back again. All night he had been expecting me, and had kept listening for my step, while he sent again and again to see if I had returned. Just once he had risen excitedly in bed, then his strength had failed ; and those who were listening heard him bid his brother good-night, with the whispered prayer “God bless you.” Then he had lain quietly back with his fading eyes upon that glimpse of heaven beyond the lattice window, and had died quietly at midnight.

What ? The money ? Don’t ask *me* what became of the money. Over those five notes I worried myself at last into the most serious brain fever that ever man came back from into life again. They were gone. No trace could I ever find of my old pocket-book, though I made it well known that the numbers of the notes had been taken. When I had offered £50 reward and *that* did not bring them, I doubled it and offered one hundred. Who would care to keep them then? Who would keep five notes which were stopped, when they could receive five available ones of equal value by only bringing the worthless old pocket-book to me ? But no one brought it, and then I advertised anew, offering £150 reward for those five £20 notes. Of course, I tried to make out that it was the old pocket-book I set the value on, but after all I didn’t much care who had the laugh against me if I could only set this matter straight, and give it an air of daylight reality. But no—that never brought them.

Another cock-fight ? No, I never saw another cock-fight. Don’t ask me any more. It’s five-and-thirty years ago—let it rest.



ONE WHITE LIE.

WITHOUT, the wide park was growing rapidly dark beneath the curtain of grey cloud which, hiding the winter sunset, was fast overspreading the sky.

Within, firelight already glowed warmly in the long picture-gallery ; and as the fitful gleams fell on the pictured wall, faces of dead L'Estranges shone out with sudden life. She had curled herself up comfortably on one of the broad window-seats, and pressing her cheeks against the cold glass, watched—for what was best known to herself. Soon she became a subject of speculation among the merry group whom she had deserted ; who had clustered themselves round one of the large fires which blazed at either end of the gallery.

"Gertrude, why are you sitting out in the cold?"

"Gertrude, have we offended you?"

"Miss Melville, *do* come back."

"Gertrude, what are you looking at?"

"Miss Melville, shall I come and help you?"

Such were the questions they tossed over to her ; but few of them were answered. Only now and then she fired back a sharp one : "What does it matter to you?" "I shall get cold if I like." "Leave me alone!"

And so after a time they did, and their laughter and gay voices rang unheeded on her ear. She never stirred, or moved her eyes from the white carriage-road, which grew less and less distinct every moment.

Now the wind began to sigh and moan through the huge branches of many a forest king ; and a flake of snow came fluttering down with a wavering, lingering motion, followed by another, and another ; until the air was full of them. Then, through the rising storm, Gertrude's ears caught a sound of horses' hoofs coming along at a rapid, swinging trot ; her heart leaped up, and the colour deepened ; while a light, not of the dancing blaze, shone in her dark brown eyes. She strained her gaze through the thickening snow, and the last glimmer of daylight showed her a man on horseback at the door below. Then she made a sudden movement, as if she would join the others, but a second thought stopped her, and she returned to her old position ; but the eager eyes were satisfied, and the ear was strained now to catch that footstep with such music in its fall. The door opened and it was there.

"Ah, Miss L'Estrange, how cheerful you look ! How do you do?"

A tall man, with broad shoulders and a deep voice, with a strong Scotch accent in it, had found the group at the fire. Every hand was ready to meet that of David Gower.

"Cold? I should think so! A regular snowy Christmas." And then his eye began to rove; he missed something from the circle round him.

"Gertrude," called Eva L'Estrange, "here's your 'particular friend.' Come out of the cold, child."

His bright blue eyes lightened, and went straight as an arrow to the place where she was sitting: then he followed them.

"In the cold?" he said, and his voice softened exquisitely.

"I'm not cold. Mayn't I watch the snow if I like?"

"No, little one. Come to the fire."

And she came. "A little one" indeed, beside his height and breadth. As the firelight shines on her face, let us see what it is like. Not strictly beautiful by any means, compared with Miss L'Estrange's regular features; but very fair to look upon, thought David Gower.

The nose was not straight, but it was delicately shaped. The imperfect mouth was always either bewitchingly merry or seriously sweet. The brown hair and eyes were soft and bright; the low, broad brow as pure as ivory. Women invariably called her plain, but most men thought her pretty. To David Gower she was beautiful.

The circle opened to let her in, but she was not a favourite with them. She was too easily offended and sharp with her answers for the girls, and too distant and independent for the men.

But David was her particular friend. He had lately become a large landholder in the neighbourhood, and farmed it himself. Extremely clever in agriculture, he became Mr. L'Estrange's right-hand in such matters, and grew so popular with the people that Mr. L'Estrange, who hoped to be returned for the county at the coming election, found in David Gower a man of great power and influence, and cultivated him accordingly. All that was known of his parentage was that his father, who was now dead, had been a Presbyterian minister.

David became a great favourite at the Hall, and nearly everybody called him by his Christian name; it seemed to come so naturally, perhaps because he was so simple, honest, and straightforward in his ways. And so it was that Gertrude Melville, coming to stay at her uncle's house, had taken it into her wilful little head that nothing on earth would please her but to ride a rough pony every day of her life over the fields and roads with David Gower.

"Really it is not proper," objected Mrs. L'Estrange.

"Pooh! old David is like a father," replied her husband. "Let the child alone; it does her good."

And she was "let alone," after a brief remonstrance from her aunt, to which she replied, "I don't care to ride properly, with a groom behind me. And I mustn't hunt; but David often goes over hedges and ditches, and that is what I like. It's all right, aunt Ellen!"

So over hedges and ditches Miss Gertrude went to her heart's content

—but not to David's—for he became so dreadfully alarmed for that pretty, slender neck, that it was a great relief to him when she gradually became less and less attached to "cross country" riding, and took to liking quiet canters down lonely lanes; and still better when she grew tired even of a canter, and their horses walked slowly side by side, and long, long talks beguiled the flying hours. The fairy beauty of the frosty morning, the roar of the forest trees, the bare branches that would bud again in spring-time, the dead-leaved earth, which only slept, had for them eloquent teachings; voices that spoke low, and near to their hearts; until strange silences used to fall between them, as they rode side by side through the wintry land.

Somewhat Gertrude was changed. Her wildness had departed, she was softer and gentler. Until Mr. L'Estrange triumphantly inquired of his wife whether David Gower had done any harm.

"No, unless she has fallen in love with him." To which her wise husband replied with a laugh of contempt, "In *love* with him? Why, my dear, *David* is not the sort of fellow girls fall in love with, I can tell you."

But Mrs. L'Estrange might be supposed to know a little more about the matter than he did. She knew a very short road to a woman's heart, with which David Gower in all unconsciousness seemed to be very well acquainted; and that was, a gentleness of manner, and an air of protecting strength, which made you turn to him in trouble, and feel ready to face any danger by his side. Therefore, when this change came over Gertrude, her aunt felt much relieved to think her visit was nearly at an end.

But alas for the "little one!" She crouched down in her corner by the fire, and gazing on the face of her "particular friend" as he talked with the others, kept saying over to herself with a miserable despair—"Only a week more! Only a week more! O, I cannot, *cannot* go away!" And she repeated aloud, "I cannot, and I *will* not!"

"O, dear me, Gertrude, what an awful little witch you are!" exclaimed Eva. "She is talking to herself in a most dreadful manner, Mr. Gower."

Poor Gertrude grew crimson to her forehead, and in another moment tears would have blinded her frightened eyes, for twelve bantering remarks were addressed to her at once; but David came to her assistance saying, "They shall not tease you! They dare not, if I protect you."

Gertrude recovered herself and laughed. "I was half asleep, I think," she said. "Firelight does make one so sleepy. Eva, it must be time to dress for dinner." But she did not look up or speak to him who was standing by her side. And as the circle broke up, she went soberly away with the other girls, leaving him thoughtful and silent, with the gentlemen by the fire.

A very deep fit of thoughtfulness indeed seemed to have fallen upon

David Gower, and he sat through the long dinner almost in silence. His eyes were always wandering down the table to where a light figure in a white dress, with variegated holly in her hair, sat on the other side. Now and then, he saw how her eyes seemed to search for his, from which, when they had found them, they dropped or turned away in sweet confusion ; and some one, speaking to him after one of these glances, was struck by the radiant smile that lit up his grand, good face, making it positively handsome.

The evening came to an end—Christmas Eve, and the ladies had retired. Eva L'Estrange and her friend Mary Vere were chatting together in the latter's room, until Eva, looking at the clock, and finding it two or three minutes to twelve, proposed that they should listen for the Christmas bells before going to bed.

"Then, let us come into the gallery. The windows look right on to the church, and we can open a shutter."

So they went—in their pretty dressing-gowns, with their bright hair upon their shoulders, looking almost like the angels of long ago, as they glided along until they reached the folding-doors of the picture gallery.

One was half open, and a faint glimmer from the turned down lamps showed them that which made them catch their breaths as each whispered, "Is it a ghost?" They had nearly turned and fled, when their eyes, becoming more accustomed to the dim light, beheld, not a ghost, but a huge burglar, all in black—David Gower, in fact, with Gertrude by his side.

"Hush!" murmured Eva. "Well I never!"

"Is he making her an offer?" asked Mary Vere.

There stood Gertrude, in her white dress, with both her hands in David Gower's, but there was no sound of a word ; and so deep was the silence that softly as dream-bells upon the night breeze, came the swelling peal that rang in Christmas morn. At this moment Eva, moving her hand which held her brush, knocked it against the door : the sound went echoing down the gallery, and at the noise Gertrude sprang from David's side, while the two girls turned round and rushed away, but not before a stifled laugh reached the ears of the other two.

"Oh, what was it?" exclaimed Gertrude, in dismay.

"Only those mischievous girls," replied David. "Never mind ; they would not see us—exactly ; and you were looking for your brooch, you know."

But bidding him a hurried "good-night," Gertrude ran away to her room.

David had not made her an offer at all, and their interview, so rudely interrupted, was in this wise. Gertrude, in her room, dreamily taking off her ornaments before undressing, suddenly missed a favourite brooch she had worn during the day. Believing she had dropped it on the window-seat in the gallery, she straightway went to look for it, and was

in the act of turning up one of the lamps when David (who had been changing his evening coat for a smoking one) came across the gallery on his way downstairs. She explained her errand, and they were searching together when, suddenly and sweetly, the first peal of those midnight bells broke upon their ears.

"Hush!" Gertrude had softly said; "it is Christmas morning." And lifting her eyes to his face, had met there an expression which sent a quiver of joy through every vein. She was turning again to her search, when, taking her hands, he had said tenderly, "At least I may wish you a happy Christmas, child."

The words had but left his lips when that sound of stifled laughter told they were discovered. Gertrude's cheeks were burning when she reached her room.

"And yet, why should I care?" she argued. "David and I will be engaged before long." And she clasped her hands together with a little rapturous gesture, as she stood dreaming in the red fire-glow.

But the next day passed, and the next, and David was still silent, while Eva and Mary Vere teased her unceasingly. Then came a great pain unto Gertrude's heart, and a fear that, after all, perhaps, he only cared for her as the "little one," and she should have to go away into the wide, dark, desolate future, without the love of David Gower.

Every fibre of her young heart was thrilling with the sharp pangs of dying hope, when one day Eva, mentioning her going away, said more seriously than usual: "Well, Gertrude, and when is your engagement with Mr. Gower coming out?"

Smarting under the wound so roughly touched, she turned round, and answered, "Don't talk such nonsense, Eva! If you think I am going to marry a common farmer like him, you are wonderfully mistaken."

"O, I beg your pardon, dear," replied Eva, laughing, and some one calling her in the hall, she ran out of the room.

It was the library they were in together. Dark with the snowy day, and heavy curtains, draping the deep bay-windows; but the fire light was pleasant, and the two girls had sauntered in, attracted by its warmth. Gertrude was a great deal too restless to remain there by herself, and was slowly crossing the room, when she suddenly became aware of a gentleman in one of the windows. Her heart turned sick and cold as she saw the face of David Gower.

"O, David, David!" she exclaimed recklessly, and stretching out her hands towards him, "I did not mean it! indeed, I did not mean it!"

He made no reply; did not even turn his face towards her, but in the expression of every altered line she knew, without doubt, that he did indeed love her, and covering her face with her hands, she burst into a passion of tears.

Presently some one spoke; but was it David's voice, so choked and changed? Yet it was a tender, sorrowful one.

"Don't cry, Gertrude—never mind."

"O, David!" she said, lifting up her face in an agony of supplication, "forgive me; indeed, I did not mean it!"

"Child, child, don't cry so; you *are* forgiven."

Tender as the voice was, she felt all hope was past. Was it likely he could believe she did not mean it? Her tears ceased, and she was still now from very despair. Gently he led her to the fire, making her sit down; then taking her nerveless hand in his, and telling her to think no more about it, he turned quietly away, and left the room. Gertrude saw him no more.

Silence is golden when its sweet eloquence falls between hearts sure of each other; golden when it tells what words are weak to say; but *death*, when its dark pall drops over absence and misunderstanding. To Gertrude it was a slow, gnawing pain, eating away all her youth and freshness. She was at home. Her father was an artist, her mother, Mr. L'Estrange's sister, an elegant, high-bred woman, who, in an hour of youthful enthusiasm and romance, linked her fate with that of the handsome artist. Children and poverty were the result.

A small, pretty villa was their house; an easy distance from London, and on the estate of Lord Westerleigh, whose agent was rather too particular about the tenants' rents to please Mr. Melville. "I shall go abroad," he often threatened. "In Italy, that land of art, the inspiration of genius will never leave me."

But he never went—idling on at home, doing a picture now and then, while his difficulties yearly increased. These Mrs. Melville had struggled thus far to keep from her brother's knowledge, and prevented her husband from writing to him for help, by working herself for the money, supposed to come from him. For Mr. L'Estrange had been strongly opposed to her marriage, prophesying much misery as the result. As it was, he very possibly guessed a little how things were, for Gertrude always returned from her yearly visit laden with gifts. Mr. Melville was in one of his threatening moods when she came home this time. The Christmas bills were rolling in fast, and he told her that she had seen the last of Eden vale, for that he was going to take them all to Italy. Gertrude did not much care; there was nothing but silence everywhere, and so heavily did it lie on her own heart that her mother thought she was ill. Then she roused herself, to help with the little ones, teaching one or two; to talk art with her father in the evenings; and to listen to her mother's forebodings during the day.

But it was like walking through a land of darkness—for a land of darkness and a great gulf lay between her and David Gower. There was no voice or hope anywhere; and only increased dreariness came with cold lengthening evenings of March. Then came the sweet Spring days, when the birds, seeming to catch faint echoes of the

Triumph songs of heaven,

shook out of their little throats floods of rapturous music. And the promise of the year fulfilled itself in dreamy, balmy Summer. Then, when all was bright and joyous, Gertrude nearly broke her heart with tears, and deeper and closer round her fell that heavy spell of silence that was sapping her life away. When the autumn leaves began to fall, Lord Westerleigh died—and at the Park, too, where he had come for the shooting. He had been an unmarried man, and the estate and title went to a distant cousin. What the new Lord Westerleigh was like was a subject of eager interest to his tenants. Mr. Melville only hoped he would turn off that fellow Laken, the agent—for if not, he should certainly inform his lordship that he could not remain a tenant any longer. Mrs. Melville only hoped there would be a lady at the Hall at last, and Gertrude neither thought nor cared anything about it. There was a grand funeral, and the new lord was present; those who saw him, described him as a tall, big, youngish man, but the Melvilles did not see him. He remained two days at the Park, and then went away until the following January, when he was coming back to take up his quarters there permanently.

On one of these two days Gertrude saw a ghost. She was wandering through Westerleigh Park, engrossed with her own sad thoughts, and was only recalled to external things by a low, savage bellow close at hand. Looking up, she found herself near to a herd of cattle, and a huge brown bull tossing the mud over his shoulders, his head low, his eyes glaring, with every intention of coming at her. With a cold feeling of terror at her heart, she looked round wildly for some way to escape. At a short distance there was a hedge and a stile, and that was her only chance, but she was so frightened that she felt her limbs would never bear her so far. The bull now twisted up his tail preparatory to a rush, and, with a cry for help, Gertrude turned round, and fell. That cry was answered instantly, for she had scarcely touched the ground when a strong arm raised her, and the next moment she was on the other side of the stile, and in safety. During that first terrified moment she had looked up into the face of her deliverer, and then, the effects of the fright and unexpected relief acting upon nerves already unstrung, resulted in unconsciousness. But she was safe in those protecting arms, and as she rested in them, senseless, they folded her passionately to their owner's broad breast.

Gertrude soon recovered, and found herself lying in a cottage close by; while a woman she knew well attended her.

"Dear me, how foolish I am!" she said, raising herself on her arm; "but it was that horrid bull, Mrs. Foster."

"And enough to frighten you to death, indeed, miss. It's a shame to leave that beast loose; I'm sure it was a mercy the gentleman was there."

"Who was it?" asked Gertrude, as the colour came back richly to her cheeks.

"That's more than I know, miss ; he's quite a stranger to me, but dear me, *such* a gentleman ! Are you better now, dear ?"

"O yes !" said Gertrude, putting her feet to the ground. "I'm all right, thank you. Good-bye, Mrs. Foster."

Her heart was beating wildly with a joyful expectation as she hurried away down the lane. Her deliverer was no stranger to *her*, for in the face she had seen for one moment, bending so anxiously over her, she had recognized David Gower. But why was he there ? If to see her, why had he not stayed to speak to her ? Yes ! she had seen him ! He was no myth, for she had been saved by his stalwart arms, but he had only done what any other man would do, and left her without a word. He had vanished as mysteriously as he appeared ; in vain her eager eyes searched the wide expanse of park, and the long, straight lane before her, there was no living creature in sight, but the browzing cattle —no sound, but the fall of dead leaves, as they rustled drearily to the ground. A day or two of feverish expectation followed, but he appeared no more, and sadly this last hope faded and died. Still it was sweet to owe her life to him.

Christmas came and passed. Mr. Laken could not get Mr. Melville's rent, and no promises on his part of paying in a week's time, or of reporting the agent to Lord Westerleigh, prevented him from putting in a distress.

"It shall be paid at the end of the week," said Gertrude, for she had persuaded her mother to let her write to Mr. L'Estrange. "Can you not take my word ?" she added, indignantly.

"I don't care for words, Miss Melville," replied the agent. "You have five days, and the man will behave himself."

"Very well," said Gertrude, briefly ; and with that she put on her hat, and set off across the park. She was going to the house ; she knew Lord Westerleigh had arrived the day before, and she believed a gentleman would take the word of a lady. It was already dark when she rang the bell at the great door, but the sounding echoes stirred no feeling of awe or misgiving in her heart. A servant appeared, and she asked for Lord Westerleigh. The man was a stranger, and replied, simply, that "my lord was engaged."

"Then, I will wait until he is disengaged," replied Gertrude.

"But I don't think my lord can see you at all to-night. You had better call again in the morning." And he prepared to shut the door as he spoke.

Gertrude was almost in a passion but controlled herself.

"I think he *will* see me. Be kind enough to tell Lord Westerleigh that Miss Melville would be glad to speak to him for a few minutes." As she made a step forward the light fell full upon her, and the dignity of her manner and appearance seemed suddenly to convince the man that he was speaking with a lady. He begged her pardon, and wanted

to show her into a room while he went with her message to his master, but Gertrude preferred remaining by the fire in the hall. In a minute or two he returned, requesting her to follow him, and she soon found herself in a small, comfortable room, lighted only by the fire. The walls and curtains were crimson, relieved by lace, and a few marble statuettes; the furniture and carpet were of the same colour, and the warm fire-light glowed over everything.

On the hearth, with his back to the fire, stood Lord Westerleigh; a man with a fine, tall figure, but whose face she could not see. To her surprise, he came forward with an out-stretched hand, when the servant lighting some candles on the table, revealed his face. Gertrude shrank foolishly back from the hand she was about to take, and found herself face to face with *David Gower*.

"I beg your pardon," she began, turning white to the lips. "It was Lord Westerleigh I came to see."

Rather a mournful smile came to his lips as he put his hand behind him, and replied, "I thought you knew I was Lord Westerleigh."

"Lord Westerleigh!" repeated Gertrude, the blood rushing to her brow. "I did not know it, indeed."

"Don't apologize, Miss Melville. Will you shake hands with me now?" he said, holding out his hand again.

"And gladly," came from Gertrude's full heart.

He smiled, and taking her hand, said with his old kind voice, so that she could have knelt down and kissed his feet, "And what can I do for you?"

Tears rushed to her eyes and she looked down to hide them, but he must have seen them, for he turned round, and stirred the fire to give her time. Then she told her story, with a red flush of shame on her brow.

"My father must leave, I know, and we must live differently; but if you will tell Mr. Laken to take the man away, he shall have the money by the end of the week."

Lord Westerleigh did not reply at once; he walked backwards and forwards twice.

"I am so ashamed," he said at length, "that such a thing should have been done in my name. I will walk back with you, and set it right. I am very, very sorry."

Gertrude made no reply. It was she who felt ashamed, for he whom she had called a "common farmer" was Lord Westerleigh, and far above her—so far that he had evidently quite forgotten any affection he might once have had for her, and a bitter pang was making itself felt in her heart as she saw in his calm, unembarrassed manner no sign of the love that had once been hers.

So they walked back together through the dark evening. Not many words passed between them, and Gertrude tried to realise that

David Gower and Lord Westerleigh were one and the same person. She was wondering how it was they had heard nothing of the matter from the L'Estranges; but then she remembered that they were still abroad, having gone at the end of the summer. In spite of his altered manner, she felt strangely happy walking once more by his side—so conscious of the charm of his protecting presence.

The house-door stood open, and Mrs. Melville was peering into the darkness.

"Gertrude! Is that you?" she called anxiously. Gertrude ran forward, and nestling up to her mother, murmured, "Here is Lord Westerleigh, mamma; and he will take the man away." And before Mrs. Melville could ask for an explanation, she rushed out of sight up to her own room, where a pent-up burst of tears would be restrained no longer. When they had exhausted themselves, she sat and listened for sounds below. For some time all was silent; then the drawing-room door opened, and she heard Lord Westerleigh and her father's voices as they walked down the passage. A cordial "good-night" closed the interview, and as the hall-door closed, Mrs. Melville came upstairs into Gertrude's dark room.

"Is it all right, mamma?"

"Yes, my dear—but how was it you never told us you had met Lord Westerleigh at your uncle's?"

It was well for Gertrude the darkness hid her tell-tale cheeks.

"Why, mamma, I never knew he was Lord Westerleigh until I saw him this evening. He was only Mr. Gower, you know."

"I should have blamed you for going to him, if he *had* been a stranger Gertrude."

"But is he not kind and good?" She was so bold in the dark!

"Good and kind? indeed he is, God bless him," replied Mrs. Melville, earnestly. "Your father is to begin painting his portrait immediately. He said he considered himself fortunate in finding an artist so near. He is going to have his house full of visitors soon, and he hopes I will go, and help him entertain them. Oh, Gertrude!" said poor Mrs. Melville, with tears in her voice, "you cannot tell what it will be to me to go back once more into the society of my youth!" Gertrude's arms were round her mother's neck; she felt very happy somehow.

"Dear mamma, I am so glad! You are too pretty never to be seen."

Mrs. Melville laughed, and kissed her.

"How curiously things happen," said Gertrude; but her mother did not answer, for a dim dream of a possible future was dawning on her mind.

And now Gertrude's life was changed—the silence was broken. There was a voice somewhere always singing to her inmost heart, an echo,

perhaps, of Lord Westerleigh's few words of greeting, which were hers now two or three times a week, for he came to Mr. Melville's house to sit for his portrait—he said he preferred it—and thus came across her now and then in her walks. Once or twice they nearly fell back into the old way of conversation, as when they used to ride side by side at Eden vale; but Lord Westerleigh always checked himself if they seemed to be drifting too far in that direction. His manner was most kind and friendly always, but his voice never once dropped into the tender tone of old; yet Gertrude was not unhappy, because he was present.

His visitors arrived, and Mrs. Melville was much at the Hall. He apologized, as he said, for the trouble he was giving her, adding that he had a sister engaged now in attendance upon an invalid aunt, who in a few months, he hoped, would come to live with him and do the honours of his house. Gertrude and her father were also often invited, and about that time a rumour arose that Lord Westerleigh was about to take to himself a wife; but which of those fair girls, who with their fathers, mothers, and brothers, had been his guests, was to be the future mistress of Westerleigh, Gertrude could not discover. But the truth of the report she never doubted, and in her mind it was confirmed one lovely Spring Sunday, when an old and a young lady appeared in the Hall pew.

For who but his betrothed wife could that fair woman be, with the calm, sweet face, who sat, and stood, and knelt by Lord Westerleigh's side? Gertrude's eyes sought hers with all her soul in them. "And who so fit to be his wife?" was her despairing comment. A woman near to his own age, beautiful, dignified, with a sweet, intellectual face, grave and restful, the promise of a wise, gentle ruler of his house, and a guardian angel of his life. Gertrude's eager, sorrowful face could scarcely escape the notice of her on whom it was fixed, and she saw her bend towards Lord Westerleigh when the service was over, evidently with an inquiry; for he, half glancing at Gertrude, looked away with a brief reply.

A slight lifting of the eyebrows, and then came a new light into those blue eyes that were such a match for David's, while Gertrude slipped away shrinking and shivering under their gaze.

She ran out into the woods that afternoon, for she wanted to find out how to bear her fate; she believed that was decided now, and discovered that the voice which had broken the silence, had been but the voice of hope telling a flattering tale. She was treading on blue hyacinths, crushing them ruthlessly, and plucking hawthorn blossoms indiscriminately, as she walked, when suddenly she looked up as if by instinct, and saw the objects of her thoughts close at hand. She started on one side to get away through the trees, but Lord Westerleigh's voice brought her to a stand-still.

"Gertrude,"—(how strange, he had not called her that for many a day)—"Gertrude, I want to introduce you to my sister."

His sister!

The manner with which she received his communication did not escape Lord Westerleigh's notice, although he was very far from attributing it to its true cause. The change of expression seemed to him to indicate extreme surprise; and one day he asked her why.

Miss Gower had gone away again for a time before coming to settle at Westerleigh for good. And one lovely evening in June Lord Westerleigh had strolled into the villa, and was standing with Gertrude at the drawing-room window.

"Why were you so astonished when I introduced my sister to you that Sunday?" he inquired.

"Because I never thought she was your sister," replied Gertrude.

"Who, then, did you take her for?" he asked.

"Why—" said Gertrude quietly, "I thought she was the lady who was to be your wife."

"My wife?" Lord Westerleigh's broad brow contracted, and he bent his blue eyes sternly upon Gertrude's unconscious face. She was gazing out into the fair twilight, but not so dreamily as a minute ago.

"My wife?" he repeated, and the sternness of his voice recalled her attention. She looked up at him, and coloured slightly.

"What chance is there of that now?" he continued. "If any one had cared for humble David Gower, it would have been different; but now rank and wealth are in the way, how shall I learn to believe that I might be loved for myself?"

It was scarcely the passing breeze that made Gertrude shiver from head to foot.

"I don't know," she said through the pain his words had roused. "If you cannot believe in any one, you will never know."

Hot and fast in the twilight tears were springing to her eyes. She had nearly turned round and rushed away, but his voice stopped her. He spoke very sorrowfully—"I believed once."

Whether Gertrude would have thrown herself (figuratively) at his feet, and entreated him to believe again, it is impossible to say; for the maid, opening the door, brought in the lamp; upon which, Lord Westerleigh said "Good-night" hastily, and went away.

After that Gertrude was from home for some time visiting her mother's friends, and when she returned found the L'Estranges at Westerleigh Park. An arrangement had been made in her absence—Mr. L'Estrange had discovered at last how things were, and Mr. Melville's great desire to go to Italy; therefore to Italy he had promised to send them, and start them fairly there. It was with a pang of despair that Gertrude first heard the news—and to go so soon, too! this was the end of September, and they were to go in a month's time. But she

got over the despair, and came to the conclusion that, after all, she should be happier, away from Lord Westerleigh, than continually harassed by his presence ; for their intercourse with each other now had become distant and cold. Eva still joked her about him, and declared she could not understand it at all.

"For you know, Gertrude, you did care for each other."

"And what if we did?" Gertrude asked bitterly.

Eva gave her a scrutinizing glance, and was very much puzzled.

"Well, dear—never mind ! you will see some one nicer abroad."

That Gertrude might find some one there Mrs. L'Estrange happened casually to remark that evening in Lord Westerleigh's presence. Mr. L'Estrange "hoped so," and called his wife's attention to a book he was examining. Then Eva turned to Lord Westerleigh, and said, in her off-hand, laughing way—

"You were her first love, you know !"

"You flatter me, Miss L'Estrange," he quietly replied ; but his colour changed.

"I never flatter!" laughed Eva.

"Can you be serious?" he said, bending anxiously towards her.

"O, I never pledge myself to anything ! Where is mamma going ?" And Eva, fearing to be questioned further, rose from her seat and left him.

To-morrow the Melvilles were to leave Westerleigh. The October twilight was falling fast. Lord Westerleigh had been to bid them good-bye, and was gone. The last finishings of packing were over, and Mrs. Melville sat down to rest.

"I must see him once more," said Gertrude to herself, as she hurried across the Park with an uncontrollable sob rising now and then in her throat.

An old public path ran close by one side of the house—a gable end, jutting out by itself, and containing on its ground-floor Lord Westerleigh's own study. Laurels had been planted in front of the window to screen it from the footpath, and although the latter was now disused, the shrubs were still allowed to grow thick and tall.

To this spot Gertrude hurried her steps. The evening was darkening, so there was no fear of discovery, and she hoped to catch one glimpse of his beloved face before the shutters were closed. With a beating heart, she opened the little gate, and gliding into the shelter of the laurels, glanced at the window. She was not disappointed—there, in the firelight, with his dog lying at his feet, sat Lord Westerleigh. But she had only time to observe that his face was buried in his hands, when the dog sprang towards the window with a growl. Gertrude grew cold with terror—escape was impossible, and discovery next to certain, for the dog, tearing at the window, refused to be quieted. Lord Westerleigh, who had followed her, now opened the glass-door, and the

animal rushed at the laurels. No sooner had he reached them, however, than his bark ceased, and he began to fawn, and wag his tail, knowing Gertrude well. She was cowering back into the shrubs—her face hidden in her hands.

"Gertrude! Can it be *you*?" asked a well known voice. "What are you doing here?"

Turning from him with a throbbing heart and burning cheeks, she told him the truth.

"I only wanted to see you once more through the window, before I went away. You know we used to be friends."

He made no reply, but led her in, and closed the doors again. He felt she was trembling violently, but he did not ask her to sit down; he let her stand beside him by the fire. The hopeful doubt he had aroused in his heart was satisfied now, and he was so happy that he could afford a joke.

"But, Gertrude, I was once a 'common farmer.'"

"O, don't!" she cried; "don't be so cruel now. Let us be friends, and say good-bye." And she burst into tears.

"Say good-bye, little one? Never again, my darling, never again!"

And taking her in his arms, he held her there, as if indeed he never meant to let her go again.

"O, David, David! do you believe me now?" said Gertrude, her voice smothered in his broad breast; "that I only said it because—because ——"

He interrupted her tenderly.

"Never mind—because you *loved* me, dearest. O, child, what a fool I have been!"

She tried to answer, but he took it in the way he liked best. And she was silent in her full, deep joy, thinking it must be a dream to stand there in the red firelight with David's arm to rest on.

"O, David," she said at length, clinging to him; "it cannot, cannot be true."

"Thank God, it is!" he murmured, as he raised the little wistful face to his and held it there.

Once more, through the darkness; they walked back across the Park, and presented themselves before the astonished eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Melville.

David was very abrupt. "You must stay another week," he said, "and leave me a wife."

They did so. And at the end of the week drove away to the station, leaving Gertrude and Lord Westerleigh at the church door.

And quietly through the brown October woods—through the golden light of Autumn days—with the full, sweet Spring-time of love in their hearts, the bride and bridegroom walked home.

MARY.

PURE as new-fallen snow the virgin heart,
 That never gave or took a lover's vow ;
 That never knew love's raptures and love's strife ;
 'Calm as her own young brow :

Mary, what thoughts are yours, whose thoughts are free ;
 Whose fancy is not bound by tyrant chain—
 Chain none the less though it be hid with flow'rs ?
 Ah ! must we ask in vain ?

Your lips are smiling, and your clear grey eyes
 Look far away into the spirit-land.
 Will you not tell the visions that you see ?
 Should we not understand ?

Scarcely, perhaps ; for passions blunt the sense :
 Our grosser ears might fail to catch the key
 To which the music of your life is set
 In tender melody.

Our grosser eyes, perchance, would blindly miss,
 In yonder world, half of the fairy show—
 The subtler shades 'midst all the rainbow tints
 And strange ethereal glow.

Yet something we may guess. Your cloudless brow,
 And smile as tranquil as the moon's soft beams,
 Tell us, as tell your placid eyes, that you
 Are happy in your dreams :—

Dreams surely of things beautiful and high ;
 Better and nobler than to man are giv'n ;
 So pure and fair that they can only find
 Their prototypes in heav'n :

Dreams where *self* is not all ; where sacrifice
 Is simple, because each is bound in each :
 Dreams where the dew is still upon the grass ;
 The bloom upon the peach—

Where love is something more than fond desire ;
 Where friendship lives for ever, warm and true ;
 Where *all* may win the lofty golden goal,
 For ever kept in view ;

Where—No, we will no longer strive to tread
 Your airy path ; to see the sights you see :
 But leave you to your sweet unconscious self,
 "In maiden meditation fancy free."

EMMA RHODES.

THE MAJOR'S DAUGHTER.

By the Author of "EAST LYNNE."

A PRETTY white country house stood in its garden ; a smooth green lawn in front of it, dotted with flowers. It was the residence of Major Piper.

The August sun, travelling westward, shed its beams on this pleasant dwelling ; and on an upper servant of middle age, who had come to the door, and was standing in the attitude of listening, her hand shading her eyes as she gazed towards the road.

"Here she comes!" muttered the woman at length, dropping her hand. "And may the Lord soften the tidings to her!"

A luggage-laden fly was turning in at the gate, one young lady seated inside it : a graceful, bright girl of seventeen, with a sweet countenance, luminous brown eyes, and chestnut hair. Before the fly had well stopped, she flung the door open, sprang out, and took both hands of the woman lovingly in hers.

"Oh Day, Day! how glad I am to see you!"

"Bless your dear face, Miss Laura!"

"And where's papa?—and why did he not come to meet me at the station as usual?" asked the young lady, who was Major Piper's only child. Mrs. Piper had died three years before.

"Well he—he was busy, Miss Laura," replied the servant, with uneasy evasiveness. "And now he has just stepped out ; but he won't be long. You come up to your room, dear."

Another servant had appeared to help the driver with the boxes. Laura ran up the stairs, and was about to enter her own room, when Day interposed.

"Not there, Miss Laura. Your room, this time, is to be higher up."

"Why, Day! What's that for?"

"I'll show it you," said Day evasively ; and made a kind of run for the upper stairs. Just then the chamber door was opened, and a French nurse and two children appeared at it, one of them in arms. Laura stared in blank amazement, and hastened after Day to know the meaning of it all.

Ah, it was a pitiful tale the faithful woman had to tell ! She had been Laura's nurse, and she felt it keenly. Major Piper, going over to Boulogne-sur-Mer to while away the time, which hung somewhat heavily on his hands in the absence of his child at school—he had sold out of Her Majesty's service some years before—fell in there with a Mrs. Fitztophet, a fascinating widow. The Major was simple-hearted, single-minded ; rather weak, in fact, easily swayed, and unsuspicious

as the day. She was clever, crafty, designing ; and the poor Major fell into her toils, and was secured. The marriage took place, and the Major had just brought her home. This was the news that Day had to break to Laura : the Major had gone out purposely, and deputed Day to do it.

Mrs. Fitztophet had seven children : but the Major had thought she had but two ; the other five, away at nurse or school, turned up after the marriage. Some of them had come home with the bride, and they had taken Laura's own chamber for a nursery. The Major had also believed Mrs. Fitztophet to be a woman of substance, for she lived expensively ; but on her marriage with him, her income lapsed to her children. All she then had was less than a hundred a year ; and what sum the trustees might choose to allow her for those of her children who were not at school. The Major did not deceive *her*. He told her candidly that all his income (about six hundred a year) was derived from his former wife, and it would of course descend to his daughter. Of course, assented the amiable widow : but she had taken care to get all particulars out of the unsuspecting Major ; and she knew that the money was at his disposal to bequeath to whom he would ; for his wife, fully confiding in him, believing that their daughter's and her interests were secure in his hands, had made no will. It was this news—the fact of the second marriage and of the second family—that Day had to break to her young lady.

The shock to Laura was dreadful. Her first thought, arising out of her mind's general bewilderment, was of her mother. Dead though she was, it seemed like an outrage upon her that another should be brought home to fill her place. Laura had keen affections ; she was refined and sensitive, and during these first moments she thought that she would rather have died than heard it. She did not betray this to Day ; she stood quiet, calm, silent : those who feel the deepest show it least. But for her utterly pale face and quivering lips, Day might have supposed her young lady to be indifferent.

" You need not wait, Day," she said in a low tone. " I will be down presently."

Left alone, the door bolted, the unhappy girl gave the reins to her bitter mortification and grief. It seemed to her that she could have borne any evil better than this. Ardently attached to her father, as was he to her, it seemed to her that he had thrown her off utterly. Every now and then she fancied it could not be true ; that she must awake and find it a dream.

" How shall I bear it ? " she wondered, with a catching sob. " I must bear it. I shall have to be patient and humble : and I know I cannot always be so unless God helps me. Perhaps He will." Suddenly there came into her mind a verse that she had heard read in the Lesson on one of the Saints' Days.

"My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thine heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble."

Laura came out of her room presently, a cool muslin dress on, her face calm, her pretty chestnut hair smooth and bright. She met them in the hall. Her father, a rather tall, spare man of light complexion and irresolute countenance, kissed her in silence. Mrs. Piper had black hair and eyes, a high colour, and an imposing manner.

"This is your new mamma, Laura," spoke the Major. "And your sister—Cecily."

Laura found herself clasped to the bosom of her new mamma, and felt some loud kisses on her face. Extricating herself gently, she turned to the young lady, a dark and rather pretty girl about her own age, and showy as her mother.

"I see we shall be the best of friends, my sweet Laura," spoke Mrs. Piper.

Whatever surprises may have come upon Major Piper after his marriage, he took them good-naturedly. His new wife was all-in-all to him just now, and he really seemed to be looking at things through rose-coloured glasses.

"I took the step chiefly for your benefit, Laura, my dear one," spoke he, the only time he said a word to her on the subject. "In another year or so, when grown up, you would have felt so greatly the need of a mother."

Laura caught up her breath with a sobbing sigh, and it was her only answer. The child had so looked forward to the time when she should be at home for good with her dear father; when they should be all the world to one another!

The well furnished drawing-room of a house in one of the London squares was ablaze with gas and fire. Mrs. Piper sat back in a chair, holding a small hand-screen before her face; Major Piper dozed on the other side the hearth. Cecily and Kate Fitztophet, two handsome, high-coloured, and very showy girls, were reading. Laura looked like a delicate lily beside them, her sweet face lovely, her eyes soft and winning.

Seven years had gone by. They lived in this London house now, and Laura had to make herself useful in it. The two Miss Fitztophets could dress, and dance, and go abroad at will; Laura must be occupied for the general benefit. The Fitztophet sons, three of them, were out in the world; the two youngest children, Doll and Bobby, were at home, and Laura taught them. Now and again Laura would look back at her girlhood's fondly cherished hopes of life; when she saw how they had been fulfilled she had dire need of that patience that she had set herself out to exercise. The Major seemed not to observe the dis-

parity of treatment: his daughter made almost a servant, his step-daughters flourishing in Society's air: at any rate he did not hinder it. He was only a reed in his wife's hands.

"Dear me! I think I was dropping asleep!" he exclaimed, starting out of his nap. "How quiet you all are! Laura, go and sing a song."

She put down the strip of cambric she was hemming, went to the piano, and began a French song that the Major was very fond of. There was one thing that Mrs. Piper could not take from Laura—her education. It had been very superior indeed. Before the song was over, the door opened and a servant ushered in a guest.

"Mr. Grame."

Mr. Grame came in: a good-looking man of thirty, with a sensible face, broad brow of intellect, and gentlemanly bearing. Some twelve months before, when Master Bobby was attacked with scarlatina, Mr. Grame, recently established in practice in the vicinity, was called in to attend him. Bobby came out of the disorder triumphantly; Dolly also; and Mr. Grame had been intimate with the family since. Mrs. Piper liked him extremely, and she believed he was looking after Cecily. Regarding him as a rising man, she considered that Cecily might do worse: Cecily for some long while past had been encouraging the attentions of a middle-aged knight, with whom they were also intimate. But Sir Knight did not come forward with a proposal. She grew impatient, and turned her thoughts on Mr. Grame, wisely deciding that a young doctor in the hand was worth more than a knight in the bush. But she had not secured the doctor yet.

"You are quite a stranger," said Mrs. Piper, rising and welcoming him with warmth. "I don't think you have been here these two days."

"I do not think I have," he replied with a pleasant laugh. "I have been much occupied."

"Profitably occupied, I trust—taking fees from new patients," she said, half hopefully, half jestingly, as he shook hands with the rest, and approached Laura last.

Amid the bustle that arose on his entrance, Laura's voice had died away to silence. Her hands trembled, the rose-flush of love suffused her face; a thrill of the sweetest rapture stirred her heart. For it was *Laura* who induced the young doctor's visits, not Cecily: they were all-in-all to each other, and many a stolen love passage had passed between them. Mr. Grame knew nothing of Cecily's aspirations; he believed every body must see where his hopes were given, and he would have asked formally for Laura long ago had his income justified it.

"Very profitably," he replied, touching Laura's hand. She had not turned round. There was a beaming look of hope in his eyes as they rested on hers. Laura went back to her seat and took up her work.

"You are busy, as usual!" cried Mr. Grame, as he stood by her. "That strip looks like a surgeon's bandage."

"It is a frill for Bobby," she said, with one of her sweet smiles.

At that moment the tea came in, causing another stir. Mr. Grame contrived that it should cover a few whispered words.

"Can you be down stairs when I leave, Laura—at half-past nine? I want to speak to you."

She answered him with a look. Mrs. Piper chanced to see it, and her voice rung out harshly—"Laura! do you not see that the tea waits? Go and make it."

She was in the room below to time—a small study dedicated to the children's lessons. When Mr. Grame entered, Laura had Bobby's slate in her hand, correcting his exercise.

"I have got the place, Laura," he began—speaking of a post at one of the hospitals that he had been trying for. "Put that slate down, my darling."

"Bobby is so careless!" she cried, her face flushing crimson, her fingers trembling—for she had a suspicion of what he might be going to say.

"I know he is. I want to take you out of this house of worry, where you have more to do than you ought. The salary is a hundred a year, Laura, and I am making by my practice about two hundred and fifty; that's three hundred and fifty in all. Shall you be afraid to try it?"

She made no answer; only looked down and played with her watch-chain, the dimples showing themselves about her mouth:

"Only three hundred and fifty as yet," he repeated. "Not much of a sum, I know, but I hope it will get larger with every year. Shall we risk it together, Laura?—shall you be afraid to come to me?"

"I shall think it riches," she whispered.

Mr. Grame came in the morning to lay his proposals before Major Piper. The Major accepted them. As to the smallness of the income, he observed, that was their affair, and no doubt it would increase. Laura was called into the room; and the Major, whose feelings had always been easily moved, burst into tears as he gave them his blessing.

"Laura will bring no money with her at present, Mr. Grame."

"I did not ask the question, sir," replied the doctor, with a smile.

"At my death, why, of course—of course—things will be—will be arranged," added the Major, with considerable hesitation. "Laura will inherit a fair income then."

"I shall have six hundred a year," whispered Laura, in the few moments she and her lover were alone together after the interview.

"Six hundred a year!" echoed Mr. Grame, in utter surprise. For he had never heard or known that Laura had any fortune at all. In fact, he had been led, rather, to infer the contrary. Mrs. Piper had occasionally alluded to the "independent income of her dear girls; so different from poor Laura."

"It is my own money," continued unconscious Laura to Mr. Grame, "it came to me from my mother. Papa enjoys it during his life."

She spoke in accordance with her assured belief. But, now, what was the real state of the case? The half of Laura's money was already demised to Mrs. Piper. Mrs. Piper had not thought it policy to try for the whole of it at once; but she intended to do that later.

The Italians have a proverb: *Miele in bocca, guarda la borsa:* "but Mrs. Piper had decidedly not honey in *her* mouth, when she heard of the new engagement, though she meant to save the purse. To find that Laura was the object of the young doctor's visits to the house—Laura, and not Cecily!—took her entirely by surprise, and the surprise was not a pleasant one. It inflicted mortification on herself and Cecily; it might involve goodness alone knew what complication in regard to money matters: for Major Piper was getting, as she broadly put it, more soft than ever, and might perhaps be drawn into making them some allowance. So Mrs. Piper, taking the rule and the reins into her own hands, as though she were the head and master of the house, and went in wholesale for the "rights of women," quietly issued her edict for the cancelling of the engagement, and forbid it to be. She told Laura that the absurd thing was at an end utterly; she conveyed the same intimation to William Grame by letter, and forbade him the house.

Mrs. Piper was not one of those people who can be rebelled against. Her will was law. The Major bowed down to it, and in his miserable vacillation confirmed what she said. He told the engaged lovers that he had consented too hastily; that upon reflection, he found that their marriage would be a mistake, and that he rescinded the consent. Laura would not marry in disobedience, and—there it was.

For some weeks the house was in this unhappy state. Laura treated as though she were some sinful culprit, put upon, harshly spoken to, worked harder than ever; Mrs. Piper resolute; the Major torn and tormented with conflict. He did not dare to oppose his wife: but he could not bear to see Laura's unhappiness, and her wan face. Mr. Grame came to the rescue. He obtained a private interview with Laura and begged her to emancipate herself from the misery, and become his wife in spite of them.

"It will be no sin, Laura; and, as I look upon it, no disobedience," he urged. "Your father welcomed the marriage for you; he gave us his blessing; and the opposition to it does not proceed from him, but from his wife. You owe no duty to her."

It was a sore temptation! The prospect of going to happiness, out of that house of servitude and sorrow. But Laura had never been undutiful yet—and she loved her father.

"Let me talk to him once more, William," she said. "I cannot marry in opposition to *him*."

It chanced that that self-same night an opportunity was afforded. Mrs. Piper and her daughter went to some evening gathering, and the Major was unable to attend them. He sat, instead, over his bed-room fire, his feet in the fender, his head in some flannel garment of his wife's, and swallowing down quarts of gruel—for he had taken cold. Laura quietly told him what Mr. Grame was urging, suppressing her emotion as she best could. The poor, weak Major, loving this child of his beyond all earthly things, held her hand as he listened.

"What have I done, papa, that this blight should be thrown upon my life?" she asked, with a rising sob. "If it were your will that we should not marry, I would not say a word; I would bow to it: but it is not. Oh! how different all would have been for me had mamma lived!"

His hand shook as he pressed hers. This semi-reproach was, of all things, most grievous to the Major. It came home to him: he felt its truth.

"I shall be twenty-five next year, papa. I am getting older day by day. One only happiness has fallen into my later life—the love of William Grame and the expectancy of being his wife. Oh, do not, do not take it from me!"

"Hush, child!—if you begin to sob, I shall sob too; and I am so shaky and ill this evening. Look here: you and he must do it of yourselves, as he suggests. Get married without me, you know."

"And you—you will sanction it, dear papa!" she cried, her eyes moist with tears, her voice eager with thankfulness.

"Ay, I'll sanction it, child. And give you both my blessing from my heart; and I hope he'll take good care of you. But you must never betray this, Laura: it must lie between you and me and him."

And one morning in the early Spring, Laura Piper went out of the house as though about to take a walk, and at the church door met Mr. Grame, who was accompanied by his brother and his sister.

Madam rose up in indignation when the news was carried home—Laura Piper had become Laura Grame. Major Piper shut himself up, and trembled uncommonly. For appearance' sake he railed a little at his daughter; but his wife did not suspect that private treason of his, then or later.

She did not forgive Laura; her bitterness against her was intense. The marriage she never would forgive as long as time should last; and the domestic affairs were all at sixes and sevens without Laura to control them, and Doll and Bobby ran wild. Never an hour of a day passed that she was not dinnin Laura's iniquity into the Major's ears. Yielding, weak, vacillating, Major Piper began to veer round to her opinions. He avowed that Laura *was* ungrateful and wicked; and he mentally told himself that it was unpardonably crafty of her to get over him that night when he was suffering, and cause him to

say what he did say. In the reaction of feeling he went wholly over to Mrs. Piper, and wrote a stern epistle to Laura and Mr. Grame, casting them off for ever, even forbidding them to dare to address him, did they by accidental chance meet out of doors. And his last final act was to be beguiled into accompanying his wife to a new solicitor's, one Mr. Pye, and give instructions for a fresh will, leaving her all he possessed.

Ah, what injustice takes place in the world ! But for heaven above to fly to for appeal and comfort, I don't know what some of us would do when it falls upon us.

Five years rolled away. For the first three of those years Mr. Grame and his wife had been completely happy, both in themselves and in their circumstances. Children were born to them; his practice increased ; and he hoped he might in time be renowned as one of London's eminent surgeons. Major and Mrs. Piper had entirely flung them off; if by some accidental chance, as the Major had expressed it in his letter, they met in the street, they passed as strangers. That was Laura's sole cause of grief : it was terrible to her to be held at variance by her father.

At the beginning of the fourth year a great misfortune fell on Mr. Grame. He was seized with rheumatic fever. It was not at all a common case, but dangerous, prolonged, and difficult. After months and months of acute suffering, he rose from his bed partially helpless, quite unable to pursue his profession. When he could begin to take it up again, even in a small degree, the second year from the time of his seizure was passing.

And how had they been supported ? Looking back, Laura could scarcely tell ; save that it had been by herself ; her own exertions had supplied their daily wants. When any extra and pressing need occurred that she was unable to meet, something out of the house had been parted with. The furniture had not been superfluous in quantity or quality at first : it was very scanty now. Lessons in music, in French, in drawing, she gave—in anything, in short, that she could find pupils for ; and by that means she obtained sufficient money to keep the wolf from the door. They had retained their home. To give up that would be the worst of all. Mr. Grame had been known there before : and when he could resume practice people might come back again. But it had altogether been a struggle and a trial, the full depth of which none but themselves had known ; none ever would know. Even now, though Mr. Grame was, so to say, recovered, and waiting for patients, the battle with poverty raged fiercely ; and Laura believed that in the end the house must be given up. Or, rather, that it would give up them.

One great comfort had arisen for her. In the darkest trials there generally steals in some gleam of sunshine. When Mr. Grame was at the

worst, and Laura nearly beside herself with the weight that lay upon her—the daily teaching, the care of her husband, the care of her children, the insolence of the one young servant-maid, whom alone she could keep, and scarcely dared do that—she received a visit from the old servant, Day. Day had left Major Piper's service soon after his new wife entered it, but she had never lost sight of the family ; and she now came to Mrs. Grame in her affliction. “I have come to stay with you, Miss Laura,” she said, coolly taking off her bonnet and cloak, “I shall not go away again till I see you through your trouble.” And Day was there still, the prop and stay of everything ; a wonderful help and comfort to Laura ; and mortally offended if the subject of wages was hinted at.

But to get up a practice after once losing it is a work of time. Laura taught, and strove, and economised ; but debt was gaining upon them.

They sat one morning at breakfast together, they and their two elder children : the baby, a year old, was somewhere with Day. They were eating dry toast and had weak tea ; the little ones something that was called “sop :” bread soaked in hot water and some milk and sugar added to it. Laura’s tears were dropping. When the heart and spirit have long been depressed, a slight accession of trouble will cause the grief to overflow. On the table lay an open letter from the landlord’s agent : stating that unless the rent was paid within a week, he should be compelled to take steps to enforce it. They both knew what that meant.

“Don’t distress yourself, Laura,” said Mr. Grame. “That will do no good. Eat your breakfast.”

“I can’t eat. It may be the end of everything,” she went on. “Practice is beginning to come back now, and if you have to go to some obscure place you will never get one up again.”

He knew it was as she said. Almost life and death, as it seemed to him, hung on his being able to retain this house.

“William, I don’t believe Sir Edward would press you for the rent if he knew the circumstances of the case. I believe he would give you time. Agents are always difficult to deal with : exacting the uttermost farthing.”

“The agent has not been inconsiderate, Laura. He has let the rent run longer than could have been expected. But I do believe that, to remain on here, is my only chance of getting up in the world again.”

“And how could we get more furniture, if we lost this ? ” she asked in a voice of pain. “Willie, my little dear, there is no more sop : you have had your share.”

Mr. Grame handed his last bit of toast to the boy : a bright little fellow, with long fair curls. He had no more appetite than his wife this morning.

"Me, too : me toast; too," struck in the other little one. And Laura gave over to him the piece she was trying to eat.

At nine o'clock she went out to give music lessons at a school, the musical teaching of which she had obtained. When returning home at twelve, she, in passing hastily round the sharp corner of a street, ran against her father. This was the first time they had met thus closely. Each stopped involuntarily ; and their hands, perhaps involuntarily also, went out to each other.

"Papa !"

"Laura !"

"It seems as though we had met on purpose !" thought Laura, in quite a glow of hope. For on and off, throughout the morning—nay, throughout many a morning and day past—had the idea been floating in her mind that, if she could dare to see her father, he perhaps might aid them in their dire strait.

"You are much changed, Laura !"

"Yes I know it, papa. Trouble has changed me. For these two years past I have had nothing else but trouble."

"It was an unfortunate marriage, that of yours. If you had but been content to be said, Laura !"

"Papa—you know—you sanctioned it."

"Hush, child. I was very foolish, I fear ; and I—I repented of it afterwards. Why did you take advantage of my error ?"

"You have changed too, papa," she said, quitting the unsatisfactory subject—for his after conduct in regard to it had vexed her cruelly at the time and vexed her still. "You do not look well."

"I am getting old, you see, child. I shall be sixty-six this year. Age tells upon most of us."

She might well say he was changed ! The once tall upright form was now drooping and painfully thin, seeming to have no more strength left in it than a thread-paper.

"It all lies in my legs," remarked the Major. "They'll hardly carry me ; they give way under me sometimes. I had an attack of gout, Laura, some months ago, and it seemed to settle in my legs. But for this stick, I could not get along."

He pointed to the stout stick in his left hand. The other hand still held Laura's. In his glance as he regarded her, in his voice as he spoke to her there was a clinging tenderness, sufficient to prove that she was very dear to him still.

"Grame has been ill ; has he not ?"

"Very ill, papa ; ~~at~~ one time I thought ill unto death. Until recently, he has not been able to exercise his profession for nearly two years. And the post he held at the hospital had to be given up."

The blue eyes of Major Piper, weak and watery eyes now, were gazing at Laura. "How have you lived?" he asked.

"I have given lessons," she faintly answered, the reminiscence of their struggles bringing a sickness to her spirit. "It has but just kept us from starving, papa. I have three children."

"Poor Laura! poor Laura!" he murmured in pitiful sympathy.

"The worst struggle of all is setting-in now. William is resuming his practice: he has quite recovered, though is not yet very strong. He has not things to make him strong," she passionately added: "good nourishment, ease of mind. Our great fear now is that we shall not be able to maintain a position—to remain in our home, in fact; and that is necessary if William is ever to rise again."

"There's trouble everywhere, I think," cried the Major dreamily.

"I—I was thinking—that perhaps you might help us, papa," she went on, with a catching up of the breath. "I was thinking of it before I met you. A good deal of rent is owing; and we are to be turned into the streets if we cannot pay it this week. Could we find part of it, say thirty pounds, or forty, they would, I am nearly sure, wait for the rest: they have already been considerate. And William feels convinced that in another year or so, if we can but tide that over, we shall be, with God's help, straight again."

"I have nothing for myself," spoke the Major, in a flurry, as he dropped her hand.

"We don't mind privation, papa; we can put up with that cheerfully, if we may but stay in our home. It is the one chance left."

"Privation!" repeated the Major, whose ideas were rather foggy upon the subject. "You don't look as though you lived plentifully, Laura. Have you had any breakfast this morning?"

"We had tea and dry toast: we cannot always afford butter. But all that is nothing, if we can but live in hopes that things will brighten. Oh, papa, if you would but help us with the rent!"

"I have not a pound at my command; I have hardly a shilling," he replied, in a shaky voice, as he laid his hand upon her arm to enforce the truth of the words. "There are so many outgoings at home, child; so many! I don't know how she makes both ends meet"—alluding to Mrs. Piper.

"You cannot tell what our struggle has been, papa," said Laura, imploringly. "Oh, if you could but do a little for me in this great need! I am your only child, papa, and you used to love me very dearly. What shall I do, I and my little children, when we are turned from our home?"

"But I can't; I can't, Laura. I would if I could. My dear, I'd like to pay everything you owe, and set William on his legs again; but I can't do it. I have no more power to help you, Laura, than has that ragged boy, playing marbles in the street."

She sighed deeply: she saw how it was; that he had really not the ability to aid her; and the one fluttering, doubtful hope was gone.

She had no one else to apply to now. The whole world lay around her, but she stood in it friendless and helpless.

"I heard, papa, that I was never to have anything more from you again," she resumed, willing to know the worst in all ways. "Is it true?"

"Is what true?" repeated Major Piper.

"That you have made a fresh will and left my name out of it."

The Major's countenance took a most uncomfortable aspect. His brow went into wrinkles; he seemed not to know where to put his gaze. But of answer he made none. That one act of his, the willing away Laura's money, often pricked his conscience: he never thought of it without shame. Laura waited for him to speak: the rumour, that it was so, had reached her ears a long while ago.

"You see, Laura, when you went away and got married, Mrs. Piper said you did not deserve to inherit money; and I—I thought so too."

"The money was my own mother's, papa."

"Ay—yes. Well, good-bye, Laura. The world's full of perplexities."

Clasping her hand, he walked away as swiftly as his weak legs would carry him, a great pain at his heart. Laura dragged herself wearily home. She knew the worst now. Her money had gone from her.

That same night when she and her husband were sitting together alone, she told him what had occurred. There was no hope of help from her father. Mr. Grame said he had never, himself, thought of any help from that quarter. When a man was under the hands of such a woman as Mrs. Piper, he had neither will nor property of his own.

"But, to covet my money!—to cause it to pass to her when papa shall be gone! *Is it right, William?*"

"It is wrong in the sight of heaven and of man," emphatically pronounced Mr. Grame. "And, mark me, Laura! it will do neither her nor hers good, whoever lives to see it. Ill-gotten money never brings a blessing with it. Do not let it vex you, my dear. Things will come round."

Mr. Grame seemed to take the matter coolly and to be making light of untoward prospects generally—of the needed rent, of the prolonged struggles, of the lack of patients, of everything. Laura left him whistling a popular tune. But later, when she re-entered the room unexpectedly, she found him buried in gloom. He did not hear her come in, and she saw him as he was: the brow heavy with trouble, the relaxed hands hanging down, the lines of the face worn with perplexity; all suggestive of despair.

"Oh, William, don't!" she cried in alarm. "Don't *you* lose hope! That would be the worst of all."

"I was only thinking," said Mr. Grame.

"Things *will* come round," she added, repeating the words he

had used not long before; "I know they will, if we do but trust in God."

The great difficulty was, of course, the rent. Mr. Grame had no more means of getting it up then, or the half, or quarter of it, than a pump has of yielding wine. But that difficulty was tided over. Stimulated perhaps by a remark Laura had made, he plucked up face and courage, and went, a petitioning beggar, to the head landlord, Sir Edward Stuart: an old gentleman who was not wont to be troubled with business matters, and who granted him an interview with difficulty.

Mr. Grame, sitting opposite to Sir Edward in the handsome room, warm with its glowing fire, redolent of ease and comfort, laid his case before him. He spoke of his once rising practice and hopeful prospects; of his long and damaging illness, that had blighted them; of how they had, through his wife's exertions, struggled on and maintained their home; he told of the few patients beginning by degrees to come back to him, and of how he did hope and believe that he should be able to redeem all yet, if he might but retain that home, where he was known: if they went forth from it, he had no possible means of procuring another. He said all this, and he asked if that one sole stumbling block, the back rent, might go on for another year.

Sir Edward, a little gentleman in a grey wig, felt quite uncomfortable. The words of the petitioner were so earnest, his voice and even his manner so full of ill-suppressed emotion, his tale so pitiful: and Sir Edward was not accustomed to be brought into personal contact with these histories of distress.

"I might lose the rent that is owing, after all, sir, you see," he observed. "And another year's added on to it."

"I trust in heaven you would not!" spoke Mr. Grame, with a kind of shiver, as he mentally realized the possibility. "I could but come and ask you, Sir Edward. It is my only chance."

"Well, you may take it," said Sir Edward, after a pause. "I don't like to be the means of turning people from their houses, sir, though they are mine. I am getting old, you perceive; and I'd not like to have to think of it on my death-bed."

Mr. Grame went home with a heart as light as a feather. And there he found a note inviting him to meet the great Mr. Paget in consultation on the morrow. For a moment his face lost all its care.

"Laura, I think I shall really get on now."

It was summer weather. Gaiety reigned at Major Piper's. Miss Fitztophet was at last going to make a grand match: a yellow gentleman from India, who was fifteenth cousin to a lord and had a mine of guineas as yellow as himself. Preparations for the marriage were in active process, and the Major was not looked after quite as closely as usual.

Major Piper had said to his daughter, during that morning's accidental meeting, that his legs sometimes gave way under him. Whether the interview with her unnerved what little strength the legs possessed, certain it was, that he fell on the steps of his house as he was entering it, and injured himself rather severely. For some weeks he was a prisoner to his room; and during that confinement other symptoms manifested themselves that served to show his life would not be a prolonged one. He had ample leisure to reflect on many uncomfortable things connected with the past; and a vivid remorse for his unkind treatment of his daughter set in. Above all, that one unjust and cruel act, the willing away her own money from her, tormented his mind perpetually.

"What a fine Spring day it is!" cried his wife to him, one day that she came up, and found him seated at the open window: for she made a point of being kind and civil to him.

"Ay," he replied. "It is the last Spring I shall see."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Piper. She knew, perhaps better than he, that he could not live to see another; but it lay not in her policy to let *him* know it. "Don't you trouble yourself with that idea, Major."

"It doesn't trouble me. At least, it would not if I had always done what I ought to do. I am thinking of poor Laura."

Mrs. Piper, putting on a shawl at the moment, let it slip from her shoulders, and turned to face him, waiting for more.

"The money is Laura's," he went on—but in his better health and without this fear of death upon him, he had never dared to say it. "In justice she ought to have it when I am gone. Or—well—say the half of it."

"I do think you are demented!" exclaimed Mrs. Piper, after a stare and a pause. "Laura's money!—that ungrateful, brazen girl, who could throw you off, and run away from her home! The money is yours, Major Piper; always has been yours: and it will be mine after you."

"It was Laura's mother's, you know. My first wife's."

"I am your wife now, Major, and have been for many a year. It is your duty to provide for me."

"And they are so badly off," went on the Major; thinking of Laura's troubles. "He has been ill and has lost his practice. They have to eat dry bread."

"Where have you learnt all this? What has put it into your head?"

"I met Laura the last day I was out, and she told me. She asked me how her money was left: I was never more ashamed than when I answered her."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Piper. "Well, she will not get the chance of worrying you again, so don't let it disturb you."

She spoke with the calm equanimity of a woman who knows she

holds the game in her own hands. For was not the Major's last will and testament, bequeathing all to herself, in her safe and proper keeping? The Major turned his eyes to the window again, and looked out on the governesses and nurses walking in the square with their charges, feeling how supremely helpless he was in his wife's hands: that what he had done in his weak folly could not be undone. And he asked himself how he should dare to face heaven with that wicked act amid his catalogue of sins.

But from that time Mrs. Piper held a tighter rein over her husband than ever. She watched him closely; she kept him, so to say, under lock and key. There was not the least chance that he would attempt to alter his will, but she took care that he should not get the possibility of doing it.

It was during this period of watching, which continued through the Spring, that the match was made up between Cecily Fitzophet and the yellow man: and the preparations for the wedding were in full flow when the hot days of summer came in. Major Piper was better then; he could walk with the help of somebody's arm and his stick; and by the orders of his doctor he sat for two or three hours daily under the trees in the square. He had said no more about Laura, and Mrs. Piper assumed that the folly had passed off, and that his mind was at rest again. Still she looked after him effectually: and he could no more have held communication with a lawyer, paid one a visit, or summoned one to the house, than he could have gone to the moon.

To Bobby—a restless young gentleman of thirteen now—was deputed the task of assisting the Major to the square. Mrs. Piper's orders were stringent. "Mind, Bobby, you are to *stay* with your papa; you are not to let him be for *one minute* out of your sight. You can play about and shout as much as you please; but you must keep your papa within view always."

There was no fear that the Major could run away. His legs could not carry him a yard alone, though he willed it ever so; but it was well to be on the safe side.

For a day or two Bobby obeyed orders. But, to stay still in one confined spot, watching an invalid old gentleman who never spoke, was beyond the philosophy of a boy of thirteen—and Mrs. Piper ought to have known that. By degrees Bobby took to leave the Major when he had seated him, and come back when it was time to convey him home. The intervening period was passed in careering about the streets with all the gamins he could pick up.

There the poor solitary Major would sit in his corner of the bench, silent and absorbed; his mind ever dwelling upon the work that ought to be done, and that he was debarred from accomplishing. The image of his last wife came back to him like a haunting spirit, and her

perfect trust in him that he would do right by their child : and Major Piper would wake up from his misery and groan aloud.

"If I could but unmake that wicked will !" he would cry with a shiver, lifting his imploring eyes to heaven. "If I could but see Parkyns !—he might manage it. If I could but get him up here when I'm out on this bench !"

There is a good saying, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." While the Major was sinking under the weight of remorse and incompetency, feeling that a chance to right Laura and to undo his own act of wrong existed not on earth, that very chance occurred to him. One sultry afternoon, just as Bobby had left him, and was gone off on his own devices, a neighbour, passing through the square, saw the Major and crossed over to him. They were not intimate, but had sometimes stayed to chat when meeting in the street. This gentleman, a Mr. Mann, spoke feelingly, as he sat down by the Major, of the change he observed in him and of his inability to get about.

"Ay, that's the worst of it, Mann—the not being able to get about," interrupted the invalid, with a wailing vehemence that astonished Mr. Mann. "I would give half I'm worth to be at Lincoln's Inn at this moment : and I—I cannot get there."

"Can I go for you ?—is it anything I can do for you ?" asked Mr. Mann eagerly, in his pity.

"I—I think you might," hesitated the Major, a hope breaking upon him like a ray of light. "It would be such a service to me."

"I will go with pleasure ; go at once," said the gentleman, rising.

"Do you know Parkyns, the lawyer ?—yes, everybody knows him. Tell him that I have great need to see him ; to see him in private, you understand ; and ask him to come to me to-morrow *here*. I sit out here on this bench from two o'clock till five every afternoon. If he can't come to-morrow, let it be the next day. And, Mann, you won't talk about it," added the Major, lifting his hand and his eyes imploringly. "And tell him not to talk."

"Trust me, my good friend," was the answer, given with a pressure of the poor, weak hand. "I will do your bidding faithfully."

The result was, that on the following afternoon Mr. Parkyns, a tall, stout man, who walked with his head thrown back, appeared in the square. He had been the Major's lawyer always : but the last will had been made by a friend of Mrs. Piper's, Mr. Pye. After talking together, Mr. Parkyns took his departure. In the course of another afternoon or two he came again, accompanied by two young men, one of whom carried a parchment deed ; and the other had a pen and ink in his pocket. The Major signed this deed, and the two clerks signed it : and in a few minutes the Major was alone again, and his mind at rest. When Bobby came back at five, all flushed and panting, the Major gave him sixpence.

Within a month, Major Piper was taken ill again ; ill unto death. It was frightfully inconvenient of him : for it was the identical week that Cecily's marriage with the yellow man was coming off. For the Major to go and die then, was, to say the least of it, unreasonable.

But death, unfortunately, is amenable to neither reason nor convenience. The medical men, two of them, hastily summoned, confirmed what indeed was apparent to all : Major Piper could not live the night through.

"I must see my daughter ; send for my daughter," was the burthen of his cry. And Mrs. Piper could not, in the face and hearing of those renowned medical gentlemen, refuse. Neither did she much care to refuse : he was losing speech and consciousness rapidly, and the will, she knew, was safe.

Laura came, accompanied by Mr. Grame. Her presence seemed to revive her father. He clasped her to him as he took leave of her ; he held Mr. Grame's hand within his feeble fingers. Both of them looked thin, and worn, and full of care. Patients were coming back to Mr. Grame, it was true ; but the struggle was a frightful one yet : and of the rent neither of them dared to think.

"You will attend my funeral," murmured the dying man, looking at each of them anxiously. "I have not been to either of you what I might have been, but you'll forgive that, and follow me to the grave." And they both promised.

"And when I made my will—that my wife holds—I ——"

"There, there !" interposed Mrs. Piper, "do not trouble about these things now."

"It leaves all from you, that will, Laura ——"

"You must keep your mind tranquil," broke in Mrs. Piper again, with more peremptory decision of tone than we are wont to use to the dying. "Say no more."

"Well, you'll come and hear the will read after the funeral," sighed the Major, yielding the point. "And you too," he added to the doctors.

"Yes, yes, of course they will come, Major," once more interrupted Mrs. Piper. "It is all right."

"Parkyns has the will, you know. Somebody must send to him."

"His poor mind is wandering," lamented Mrs. Piper in a whisper, fully assuming that, in the weakness of coming death, he was confounding his old lawyer with his new one. "It is Mr. Pye who holds the will. That is, the duplicate."

Mr. and Mrs. Grame went home at the dawn of morning. All was over then. Mrs. Piper, intending to be magnanimous, confirmed the invitation to the funeral, and whispered to Laura that she might order mourning to the amount of ten pounds.

"It is a cruel shame about that will, though," spoke Mr. Grame,

pacing his carpet in an outburst of indignation. "Laura, my dear, I feel it for your sake."

"And a little money would so have helped us!" she said, with dry eyes and quivering lips. "I don't see how we are to keep on any longer."

"But for the funeral, mind, Laura, you should not touch a coin of that woman's offered money."

"No. But I could not get mourning without it."

The funeral took place ; and all those invited by the deceased gentleman in his last hours, attended it : together with sundry other friends and connections. Mrs. Piper, secure in her position, could afford to be seemly. She had gone to the funeral herself, and she sat in the drawing-room, amid her friends and guests and children, afterwards. Save that she wore a widow's cap, she was just the same decisive, resolute Mrs. Piper as of yore. Her children were all in the deepest of mourning. Bobby especially. Apart from his sable clothes, Bobby had two black eyes, the result of an antagonistic encounter with some of his young friends, the gamins. The yellow gentleman had also been bidden, and sat by the side of Miss Cecily : but for the untoward calamity that had intervened, they would ere this have been man and wife. Mr. Grame and Laura were present, sitting near the two doctors.

The ceremony of reading the will was about to be gone through. Pye, the lawyer, stood at the table as large as life: or, at any rate, as large as a little weasel in spectacles can look. He was no doubt a worthy man in private life ; and it was not his fault that he bore a strong resemblance to that insignificant animal.

"I hold the duplicate of this will," announced little Mr. Pye gratuitously, as he received the will from the hands of the widow, and proceeded to open it.

At that moment a most tremendous knock, loud and long, was heard at the front door, a tremendous ring accompanying it ; quite startling the company out of all propriety. As one of them remarked, it was scarcely decent to come in that self-asserting way to a house from which its master had just been carried. A moment of suspense, and then Mr. Parkyns walked into the room, big and burly. Mrs. Piper knitted her brows at the intrusion, but civilly inquired what he wanted. The lawyer answered just as civilly that he had come to bring and to read Major Piper's will : which he produced from his pocket.

Some colloquy ensued between the widow and the two lawyers. Each of the gentlemen asserted that *he* produced the last will and testament of the deceased, and for a few moments they were at cross purposes. Upon referring to the respective documents, it was found that while Mr. Pye's was dated some five years before, that shown by Mr. Parkyns was made very recently.

"I don't understand it at all," gasped Mrs. Piper, a dreadful fear darting across her that she had been in some way over-reached. "Major Piper has not executed any recent will, or attempted to execute one. He had not the opportunity of doing it."

"He made the opportunity, madam," said Mr. Parkyns. And he proceeded to explain, with candour, in what manner it was done. Sitting out in the square there, brooding remorsefully on the injustice he had been guilty of to his only child, the Major had sent for him—Parkyns. He had come down in answer to the summons, had taken instructions for the will, and had it made; and brought it down for the Major to sign, together with two of his clerks to witness the signature. "All outside there on the bench under the trees in the square," related Mr. Parkyns, "and the poor Major said that he could then die in peace."

Amid the various phases of consternation and the deep silence that fell upon the room, Mr. Parkyns proceeded to read the will. It was very short. The house of furniture and any money that might be lying at the banker's, were bequeathed to his wife, Cecilia Piper: but the six hundred a year that had been his first wife's, he left to his dearly beloved daughter, Laura Grame. Mr. Grame was left sole executor.

So justice was done at last, and Laura had her own.

As the full meaning of what this will implied—desolation—stole over the perceptions of the family, their emotion rose. Mrs. Piper shrieked and went into a semi-faint. The young ladies shrieked and sobbed. Mr. Pye shrank up to nothing in his discomfiture. The yellow man stared. Lawyer Parkyns turned to Mr. Grame, and was beginning to talk to him in an undertone, when the room was interrupted by sounds of woe. Mrs. Piper had suddenly darted from her chair, pounced upon the unhappy Bobby, and began shaking him to a mummy.

"It's all your fault, you wicked, ungrateful monkey!" she raved, boxing this ear and that. "Why did you leave him to himself on that bench, to do what he liked?"—Slap! slap! slap!

"Oh-o-o-o-oh!" howled Bobby. "'Twasn't me. Who was a going to stop still in that confounded square for ever? Oh-o-o-o-oh!"

"Our pains and sorrows are over, William," whispered Laura, with a sobbing sigh. "We can pay the rent now, and the children will have enough to eat."

"My dear wife, yes. You told me to trust in God."

